

# International Notes

**Edited by Ewan Maidment**

**International Council on Archives**

*Correspondent: George MacKenzie*

Spring in Paris this year was colder than usual, but that was appropriate because it was the time for an international meeting at UNESCO on archives and climate history. Meteorologists and climatologists are interested in tracing the patterns of past weather in order to see whether the global warming that has been going on in the last years is actually a new phenomenon, or just a normal part of the movement in the earth's climate. Accurate recording of weather only goes back about 150 years, less in some parts of the world, and the question is whether archives hold the key in the form of 'proxy data', that is records that show patterns of weather. Most archivists will be familiar with records that show weather, such as reports on late or early harvests, reports of floods or droughts, and so on. The first part of our meeting looked at whether fuzzy logic, which is a mathematical method of measuring uncertainty, could be used to equate this kind of proxy data with measured data, to produce a valid series over time. The conclusion was that it could, but that more work needed to be done to prove its value. The second part of the meeting reviewed work that has been done in Mexico, where the archives have revealed a good series of previously unknown weather recordings for the late nineteenth century, and in which the US weather service is very interested. Some further pilot work has been done in Cuba and in Colombia and initial results are promising. This project, which is called ARCHISS, the data search for climate history project, shows how archives hold material of crucial value to us today.

Spring also saw a meeting bringing together ICA with the other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the cultural heritage field to discuss risk preparedness and the protection of cultural goods from disasters, such as armed conflicts. Along with IFLA for libraries, ICOM for museums, and ICOMOS for monuments and sites, ICA is forming an International Committee of the Blue Shield, to coordinate and cooperate on projects to prevent disasters, control their extent and aid recovery. The blue shield is the symbol used in the 1954 Hague Convention on the protection of cultural goods, in armed

conflicts. The recent fighting in Afganistan, ex-Yugoslavia and elsewhere has shown the need to revise the Convention, and an intergovernmental conference will review it later this year. The ICA, along with the other NGOs, will be promoting the International Committee of the Blue Shield as a means of making international response to damage to cultural goods more effective.

With summer came the long awaited signing of a contract between ICA and the Russian archival authorities concerning the Comintern project. The Comintern was an organ of the Communist Party in the former USSR whose mission was to promote communist party development throughout the world, and its archives are a rich source for the history of foreign countries. The Comintern Project aims to make this rich mass of material more available to scholars. It involves constructing a database and using the same technology as was developed in Spain for the Archives of the Indies at Seville, which was one of the earliest archive imaging projects.

Mid June saw a visit to Paris of colleagues from the organising committee for the XIII International Congress on Archives, which took place in Beijing, China, in September. Our Chinese colleagues brought welcome news that registrations from outside China were well over 1 000, and from inside China 800. The final attendance was between 2 000 and 2 500. In addition to the plenary program and Agora sessions, there were ten exhibitions or displays, including buildings, archive publications, archive posters, sigillography and Chinese Archives. There was also a pre-Congress seminar on preservation. And of course, a meeting of ACARM.

### **Archives at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London**

*Correspondent: David Ward*

For the first time the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICS) has an archivist to care for and develop its small collection of archives. Funding is available for three years to enable the new archivist to list uncatalogued collections, automate existing handlists, improve storage and preservation, develop an acquisitions program and to raise awareness of the archive collections.

#### **The Institute of Commonwealth Studies**

The ICS was established in 1949 to promote advanced study of the Commonwealth. Membership is open to academic staff and postgraduate students of any institution of higher education, for research on the

Commonwealth primarily in the fields of the social sciences, recent history and literature. It is the only postgraduate institution devoted solely to the study of the Commonwealth in the United Kingdom. The Institute includes The Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies (SRMCAS), which was established in 1982 with the object of promoting Australian studies at British universities. The Centre's main interests are in the social sciences and history but it also does work in literature, the arts, and some sciences.

### Holdings

The Institute first started to develop an archive collection actively in the mid-1960s, as part of the Colonial Records Project, in which it took responsibility for collecting documents relating to Sri Lanka. In 1966 C. L. R. James, the West Indian politician and cricket lover, deposited some of his papers. Involvement in another collecting initiative, the Southern African Materials Project (1973–76), brought in a substantial amount of material.

A commitment to archive development in the late 1970s and the 1980s was demonstrated by the listing of much of the material by Sara Joynes and the active pursuit of records by librarian Patricia Larby, with the encouragement of former Director, Professor Shula Marks. Major accessions included the papers of Simon Taylor, eighteenth century Jamaican plantation owner, and of Ruth First, the anti-apartheid activist assassinated in 1985. In 1977 much of the library and archive of the West India Committee, which was first created in the eighteenth century, was deposited on permanent loan.

Manuscript material directly relating to Australia and the Pacific region is limited, though there are supra-regional collections which might be useful to researchers in this field: for example, the Institute has papers of Sir Stephen Tallents, Secretary of the Empire Marketing Board (1926–33), Professor Sir Keith Hancock, first Director of the ICS and later Director of the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University, and Richard Jebb, well-travelled Empire publicist and writer during the first half of this century.

Other holdings include a collection of political ephemera—including election material, publications, manifestos, leaflets, posters—from all over the Commonwealth and a series of Foreign and Commonwealth Office Confidential Prints. Microforms of other institutions' archive collections are also the responsibility of the archivist. By this medium copies of records from the far-flung corners of the Commonwealth can be accessed in London. While

most of these are purchased from microform publishers, some are of materials filmed by the ICS, such as the minutes of the West India Committee.

The archive holdings complement the Institute's library, which contains approximately 150 000 volumes and runs of more than 7 000 serial publications. It is particularly strong in official publications and 'grey' literature and is actively collecting on all Commonwealth countries. It shares a computerised catalogue with the other libraries in the School of Advanced Study (the Institutes of Advanced Legal Studies, Classical Studies, Germanic Studies, Historical Research, Latin American Studies and the Warburg Institute) which can be reached on the Internet by telnetting lib.sas.ac.uk or 193.62.18.239.

In the 1990s significant archival acquisitions have so far included the papers of John Ferguson (planter, railway developer and editor of the leading English newspaper in nineteenth century Sri Lanka), and a fine collection of documents relating to the Castle Wemyss estate in Jamaica, 1802–45.

#### Appointment of an archivist

During this period, accessions were limited by concern that the archives were taking up too much space and that resources to list them were unavailable. In the absence of a trained and qualified archivist and in a period of shrinking resources in the ICS Library, the archive was not being developed and existing holdings were under-exploited. It was against this background that a successful application was made to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) for funding for an archivist for three years. Other archives in universities in the UK have also received 'Follett funding', so named because of the Committee, chaired by Sir Brian Follett, which recommended funding in support of specialised research collections.

The Institute's first archivist took up his post in November 1995 and began the initial task of improving the organisation of the archive. Following extensive surveys of the collections, storage conditions, access procedures and security, a wide range of policies and procedures for the effective management of the holdings have been introduced: in effect, the entire administration system has had to be overhauled.

The principal condition of the Follett funding is that access should be improved. This will be achieved in a number of different ways:

- **Listing.** Archives that are not listed can not be made available. It is therefore a critical function of any archive to list the records in its care and to provide finding aids for researchers. Lists will also be made available on the Internet.
- **A guide to the collections.** There has never been a published guide. It will provide an overall view of the archival holdings both to researchers and staff at ICS.
- **Preservation and storage.** Permanent preservation ensures that archives remain available to researchers. To secure optimum environmental conditions and to maximise space, all the archives will be rehoused in one location. This will be equipped with mobile shelving, the purchase of which will represent a substantial financial commitment to the development of the archives.
- **Acquisition.** New collections create and renew awareness of the archive and the Institute and increase their research resources. Because skilled personnel resources for listing are now available and storage efficiency will soon have been improved dramatically, an active acquisitions strategy can be developed. It will aim both to build on current strengths (for example, in Caribbean and Southern African material) and to create new initiatives in collecting.
- **Raising awareness.** The archive collections need a stronger identity both in and outside the Institute.

#### Raising awareness and increasing use: the Internet

Recently I delivered a paper on the ICS' collection of material from a 1986 television history of apartheid to the Standing Conference on Library Materials on Africa (SCOLMA). The collection includes over fifty hours of audio cassette recordings and transcripts of untransmitted interviews with over ninety different people who were (and, in many cases, still are) actively involved in South African politics. When introducing me the Chairman remarked that he had been visiting the ICS for years and had never known that it had an archive!

But how to reach a wider audience? One method available today is to use the Internet. Australian archives have been particularly quick to put information about themselves and their holdings on to their World Wide Web pages. The ICS Archive will join them before long. In June the archivist attended a two-day seminar in Durham, organised by the Joint Information

Systems Committee of HEFCE, which drew a number of archivists from the academic community and elsewhere to discuss the adoption of ISAD(G) as a national standard for meta-level description and the use of Encoded Archival Descriptions (EADs), developed at the University of California, Berkeley, to allow descriptions to be tagged in SGML for delivery on to the web. Much was achieved and the ICS Archive will benefit from being involved in such a development project.

Before this can happen, however, the archives must be properly catalogued and those catalogues put into automated format. Existing handlists will be scanned or keyed into a processing package and edited. Descriptions of the record groups and creators (rather than of the records themselves, most of which have been listed) will be researched and written. At the same time, work will begin on those collections which have yet to be listed. For archivists throughout the Commonwealth and the rest of the world this is the essential element of the archivist's job; when it is done and the results put on the Internet, researchers all over the world will have access to our catalogue.

### **Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Tonga**

*Correspondent: Sister Bernadette A. Fitzgerald*

The Archives is situated at 'Lutu' which was the Bishop's residence until recent years. It is located off the main road not far from the Catholic Centre, 'Totaimana'.

There are two inventories listing the holdings of the Archives. The first which contains the older material, was put together by Fr Theo B. Cook, SM and was completed in July 1980. This inventory contains letters, documents and writings of the early missionaries dating from 1810. There were also registers of Baptisms, Marriage and Burials. The second inventory which contains listings of more recent material, was completed in 1986 at the request of Bishop Patelisio Finau.

With regard to the condition of the materials held, a fireproof strongroom was built specifically for the purpose of storing the archives in 1966 under the direction of Bishop Rodgers who was very conscious of the need to keep such important items in a secure place. Because it is a concrete structure, the room tends to become damp and musty. Some of the handwriting is beginning to fade and the weather conditions have taken their toll. However, most of the material is still in reasonably good condition.

The work of the archivist is something which has simply been added on to the work of one who already has full-time work so it means that there is little time for anything other than minding what is there and trying to respond to requests for access from researchers and others.

Those wishing to request material or information should write to the Diocesan Archivist, Totaimana Catholic Centre, PO Box 1, Nuku'alofa, Tonga Islands.

## **Archives of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa**

*Correspondent: Eamonn Bolger*

Since my recent appointment as Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Archivist much of my time has been spent acquainting myself with the archive collections and requirements of the Museum.

The Museum's archives can be placed into three broad categories:

(1) **the Museum's records:** these date from the establishment of the colonial (then Dominion then National) Museum. They consist of correspondence, research, accession records and other specifically Museum related material. For the nineteenth century it is worth noting that the Museum's first Director, James Hector held a number of government posts at the same time. This was largely a consequence of his role as the governments chief scientific adviser. The early records of the Museum therefore contain a great variety of scientific information as well as personal and semi personal correspondence. With the amalgamation of the National Museum and National Art Gallery into the Museum of New Zealand in 1992 the institutional archive grew substantially in quantity.

(2) **Art Manuscript collection:** the National Art Gallery during the 1980s developed a proactive approach in gathering together a substantial collection of archive collections. Much of the collection was presented by individual artists with significant deposits by major galleries. The aim was to gather collections of archival information relating to artists whose work was held by the National Art Gallery or who were considered to be of significance. This collection has become my responsibility.

(3) **historical and collection related archives:** when it was established in 1865 the Museum was the chief repository of historically significant materials until the formation of the Alexander Turnbull Library and National Archives

this century. While most of these strictly historical collections were transferred to other institutions, the Museum still holds a significant collection. At present a project is being undertaken to identify historical manuscripts so that they can be added to the archives and become more publicly available. Among items located so far have been a First World War Gallipoli soldier's diary, a diary recording the signing the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) and a number of items relevant to the New Zealand land wars. Also included in this category are archives related to other collection and collection objects which have been deposited over the years.

Our current priority is to appraise and arrange and describe our main registered file series, as Museum staff require access for research and exhibition purposes. At the same time, with the Museum of New Zealand preparing for a major shift of premises, plans are being drawn up to develop a central archives repository allowing for climate control and enhanced public access. It is anticipated that this will be running by the time of the Museum's opening in February 1998.

We are also looking at developing a comprehensive archives policy which will take into account acquisition, access and care of the Museum's archives collections. Looking to the future we are also examining the long-term care of electronic information as well as oral history recordings.

In the meantime we are still offering a public reference service by appointment and letter. I can also be contacted by e-mail at: [eamonn@atohi.monz.govt.nz/](mailto:eamonn@atohi.monz.govt.nz/). As museums inherit many similar challenges and museum archivists are a scarce breed, I would welcome contact with others working in similar environments.

## **Manuscripts and Archives Collection, Canterbury Museum, New Zealand**

*Correspondent: Jo-Anne Smith*

The Canterbury Museum has collected manuscripts since 1909, when the Early Colonists department was established to collect and preserve historical artefacts and manuscripts. The focus of those early years was the European settlement of Canterbury last century from 1850 onwards, although we now collect and preserve manuscripts and archives relating to Canterbury to the present day.



The earliest document pertaining to European settlement is the log of the Peraki Whaling Station in 1835. Other material from this time are the personal papers of Canterbury Association member Lord Lyttleton, John Robert Godley, a Canterbury Association agent, and Edward Gibbon Wakefield. Papers of early settlers such as Charles Torlesse, Dr Alfred C. Barker, the Fyffe family, Sir Charles Clifford and many others all add to the picture of life in a new colony. Personal papers of the well-known and the unknown are prominent within the collection. For example, the papers of the leader of the New Zealand women's suffrage campaign, Kate Sheppard, contrast with little-known diarist and wife of a runholder, Frances Caverhill.

Shipboard diaries of emigrant's voyages to Canterbury number over 200, and are regularly requested by researchers who hope to read an account of the voyage made by the person they are researching. We are actively seeking shipboard diaries from this century to complement diaries from last century. Another significant category of records is farm and station archives for many Canterbury properties. Also, in more recent times over the past thirty years, records of organisations and societies have been donated. They range from organisations for social reform to sports clubs, friendly societies and military organisations. There are also records of a small number of local businesses and a few Maori manuscripts including the significant collection of H. K. Taiaroa, a Maori Member of Parliament last century. Finally, the Museum has a special Antarctic collection—covering artefacts, books, manuscripts and pictorial material. A listing of the Antarctic manuscripts collection is available (NZ\$10.00).

The Manuscripts department works closely with the Museum Library and Pictorial departments. The Library holds not only published material, but indexes with biographical and local history information. The map collection dates from the earliest settlement of Canterbury to the present day. Pictorial department holdings are estimated conservatively at over 190 000 photographic images, 10 000 architectural drawings, 7 000 artworks and 400 movie films and videos.

Future plans include revamped areas for the Manuscripts, Library and Pictorial departments, and improved storage. Participation in the forthcoming new and exciting displays which will change the public face of the Canterbury Museum is also on the cards by contributing information, items for display and our research skills and local knowledge.

Subject listings are available on the following topics (though there is a charge for photocopying): Alpine, Business records, Chatham Islands, Diaries, Farm and Station, Maori, Military / War, Mining, Music, Organisations and Societies, Reminiscences, Shipboard Diaries, Shipping, Sport and Physical Recreation, Surveyors and Surveying, Trade Unions, Whaling, Women.

## PARBICA

*Correspondent: Karin Brennan*

Since the beginning of the year the composition of the PARBICA Bureau has undergone several changes. Due to new work responsibilities Michael Piggott had to resign from his position as Treasurer, and after consultation with Australian Archives Bureau members appointed Helen Nosworthy, Director Public Programs at Australian Archives, as his successor. The President, Gabriel Gerry, has delegated his responsibilities to the Vice-President, Bruno Corre, while he himself was heavily committed to his own studies at Monash University. The Bureau has since learnt that Gabriel Gerry resigned from his position as Chief Archivist at the National Archives and Records Service in Papua New Guinea to stand in the next national elections. A decision as to whether to appoint a new President for the remainder of the term or to continue under the direction of the Acting President and Vice-President will be made at the next meeting, which will be held during the week 11-15 November 1996.

The Fiji National Archives has agreed to provide a home for the PARBICA archives. They are also willing to continue a loan service for the PARBICA library if members pay for return postage. In collaboration with Dr Peter Orlovich, UNSW School of Information, Library and Archive Studies, Fiji National Archives has been running local archives and records management courses. These are open to PARBICA members provided they find money for travel, accommodation and subsistence allowance.

In preparation for the next PARBICA conference and training seminar, Bureau members met in Sydney in April 1996 to discuss the conference and training program. This topic was again the major item for discussion at the PARBICA meeting which was held during the ICA Congress in Beijing on Monday 2 September 1996.

Present at the meeting in Beijing were Bruno Corre, Vice-President; Karin Brennan, Secretary-General; Helen Nosworthy, Treasurer; George Nichols,

Australian Archives; Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, Australian Archives; Laura Millar, IRMT; Peter Arfanis, Cambodia; and Stephanie Amiot, Noumea Municipal Archives. Apologies and best wishes had been received from Bruce Burne; John Cross, Archives Office of New South Wales; Sigrid McCausland, University of Technology, Sydney; Margaret Patel, Fiji National Archives, and Kathryn Patterson, New Zealand National Archives.

ICA/CAD has expressed a general willingness to support the next PARBICA conference. A detailed conference program for PARBICA 7 will be worked out in Noumea from 11–18 November. Current planning envisages three to four seminar sessions which will be based on the actual operations of the New Caledonia Territorial Archives. Topics include arrangement of archives, exhibitions, promotion of the archives and archives services as well as basic preservation practice. It is anticipated that delegates will be involved by way of explaining some of the archives held in their institutions.

Laura Millar from the International Records Management Trust (IRMT), London, had been invited to join the PARBICA meeting to discuss IRMT's possible involvement at PARBICA 7. While the length of the PARBICA conference does not allow for a major involvement of IRMT in the training seminar, IRMT was interested to participate to any degree PARBICA felt appropriate. Its particular interest at the time was to meet the archivists of the Pacific region and to alert them to IRMT and its programs.

The Vice-President, Bruno Corre, had prepared a draft questionnaire for a survey collecting statistical data from archival institutions in the Pacific. The finalised survey will be mailed to members and the collected data summarised for publication at the PARBICA 7 conference.

By invitation of the Organising Committee of the XIIIth International Congress on Archives in Beijing, Bruno Corre, Chief Archivist—New Caledonia Territorial Archives, and Gabriel Gerry, Chief Archivist—Papua New Guinea National Archives, were invited as PARBICA representatives to participate in the pre-conference workshop on 'Archives conservation; from ancient to now, from traditional to modern' which was held from 27–31 August 1996. Both were funded by the Organising Committee to attend the workshop as well as the ICA congress.

Ron Terry, Australian Archives, has mailed out a follow-up questionnaire to all PARBICA 6 participants. The survey data will assist Bureau members in their evaluation and planning of training seminars run in conjunction with the biennial conferences.

Other news from members include the appointment by the Western Samoa Government of Ulrike Hertel as Museums and Archives Officer and the preparation of a seminar on Preserving Heritage Sites in the Pacific by Jones George, Division of Archives and Historic Preservation—Federated States of Micronesia. The seminar is coordinated jointly by the International Centre for the Studies of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCRPM), FSM Division of Archives and Historic Preservation and the University of Canberra and will be held in Pohnpei, FSM, in November 1996.

In July 1996 John C. Wright, PARBICA Editor, at the invitation of the Yapese Government, spent three weeks in Colonia on Yap to assist with the process of establishing the Yap State Archives. Local assistance was provided by Gabriel Ramololug, the Yap Administrative Services Computer Section and Archives Manager, other government employees and volunteers. The project focused on the design of a library/archives building, a preliminary government records survey, the work on draft legislation to establish the Office of Archives and Records Management, and the formulation of a workplan for 1996–97.