South Coast History Society Inc.
RecollectionS
Issue 45 — April 2024

The Unveiling of the Bega Soldiers' Memorial 100 years ago – on 24th May 1924.
Image: State Library of NSW File FL1717672

Lest We Forget

The Bega Soldiers' Memorial is about to turn 100.

The Bega RSL sub-Branch is marking this occasion with a number of events over the weekend of 24th–26th May. These will particularly focus on remembering locals who fought for King and Country in World War I and on the community that erected the Soldiers' Memorial in their honour. A commemoration ceremony will be held at the Soldiers' Memorial at 10.20am on Saturday 25th May. The keynote address at this function will be delivered by historian Dr Richard Reid who was tasked in 1993 – coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the end of World War I – with organising the repatriation of the body of the Unknown Soldier from Villers-Bretonneux in France and having it laid to rest in the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Then, next year, the centenary of the erection of the Kiama Memorial Arch will also be celebrated.

It is appropriate, therefore, for us to now revisit how our local communities honoured, a century ago, those who fought in World War I.

Australians were consumed with grief during World War I and its aftermath. The country's young men were being killed, or had been killed, in huge numbers on the World War I battlefields around Gallipoli and the Western Front.

Eventually over 60,000 Australians were to lose their lives – and three or four times that number were to be injured.

The grief was combined with anger – at the losses themselves, at government policy not to repatriate the bodies of those who had died to Australia where a family burial could then be arranged, and because it was simply logistically impossible for family members to travel to Turkey, Belgium or France to mourn at the graves of loved ones.

But that grief, that anger was tempered by immense pride, intense patriotism - those men had gone off to fight for God, for Country, for Empire – and communities were immensely

Fantastic Reads

pleased they had volunteered to do so.

The most visible legacy of World War I today are the war memorials dotted all around the country. Almost every country town has one, as do many suburbs in the cities. And every one of these war memorials has a story to tell – or a number of stories.

By the time Australia suffered its first casualties in the Great War in 1915 there was nothing new about erecting war memorials. War Memorials had been around for three or four thousand years. And in Australia, war memorials had already been erected to honour those who fought in the Sedan (the first soldier from an Australian colony to die overseas was Private Robert Weir who died from dysentery in Sedan. A sandstone monument commemorating his death was erected by the local community in 1886 in Bombo Cemetery, near Kiama) and in the Boer War (in Nowra there is a memorial fountain, made of Carrara marble imported from Italy; in Bega there is a Boer War Memorial in the park next to the swimming pool, which was unveiled in 1905, with 1,500 people attending).

Local pride and patriotism during World War I rapidly led to the compilation of Rolls of Honor – not just acknowledging those who were killed, but honouring those who chose to join the armed services. And this is something almost unique to Australia because in Britain and New Zealand, as examples, World War I memorials typically only record the names of those who lost their lives. (The World War I Memorial in Kameruka Estate, near Candelo, illustrates this. Kameruka Estate was very much an 'English village' at the time, and the memorial there, located just down from the Church, records only the names of Estate workers (and their English bosses) who were killed in World War I.)

The Braidwood District Soldiers' Memorial

Rolls of Honor sprang up everywhere – in local newspapers, in schools, in Churches, on public buildings. They were not always deemed to be suitable. The Roll of Honor produced by the Candelo Methodist Church in late September 1916 was greeted by this observation in the town's local newspaper, the *Southern Record and Advertiser*: '*The local Methodist Church was filled at last Sunday night's service when a Roll of Honor was unveiled as a tribute to the men who have enlisted from the Methodist churches of the circuit, with the addition of others in whom the local Church had special interest…It was a matter for regret that the memorial on view did not represent the wishes of the generous donor, Mrs. Rogers, nor the plans of the Church officers. Those to whom the work was entrusted failed to accomplish what was intended, and instead of a substantial memorial worthy of a permanent place in the Church, and a tribute to the men whose names it would perpetuate, a flimsy bit of lithographic work in a frame was opened up, to the keen disappointment of everybody.*' (This Roll of Honor is now in the Bega Pioneers' Museum's collection.)

As World War I progressed, thoughts turned to more permanent, more appropriate memorials and – perhaps predictably – the government stepped in by banning the erection of war memorials until the end of the War.

Whilst this might have been a practical move, in some ways it was quite insensitive. Those who had lost a husband or son needed, and were looking for, somewhere physical to grieve having been denied the usual grave site, and deferral of the erection of permanent memorials in Australia simply prolonged or added to the grief felt by many families.

And then, after the War, when communities finally expected they would be able to erect an appropriate memorial, the government again stepped in with a whole slew of regulations and restrictions. For example, the NSW Government set up a War Memorials Advisory Board which suggested only seven types of memorials should be erected:

An Arch over a public place; or A Gateway to a public park; or A Central Road Garden, with a pillar or other feature on which to record the names of soldiers; or A Memorial Avenue, with a tree for each soldier from the district; or An Obelisk in stone; or A Column in stone; or A Fountain.

(This presented a very limited range of options. For example, it excluded the erection of statues and erection of practical memorial halls or schools. Ironically, the schoolchildren of Victoria were simultaneously raising money to rebuild the destroyed primary school in the French town of Villers-Bretonneux, which still has a sign in every classroom reading 'Do Not Forget Australia.')

The War Memorials Advisory Board was given statutory authority under the Local Government Act to approve the design and site of monuments erected in any public place.

The residents of Bermagui obtained pledges to erect a memorial, but the War Memorials Advisory Board deemed that the amount was four times more than they (the Board) considered appropriate should be spent on the town's memorial.

The Board's determination that its seven alternatives, if 'well designed, will be a better memorial than a poorly-executed, expressionless statue,' effectively discouraged the erections of statues – and particularly of any that may have incorporated mass-produced representations of servicemen. So, in NSW there are only about half the number of war memorial statues that there are in Victoria, where there was not the equivalent of a War Memorials Advisory Board. The result is that many of NSW's local War Memorials are little more than an unartistic, architecturally unimaginative plaque attached to a stone or brick base.

There are exceptions to this norm. In Braidwood there is the life-size statue of a soldier standing at ease on an intersection of the main highway through Braidwood. It was built, despite the official warnings about 'poorly designed statues' and was designed by an Italian artist. When unveiled on 5th June 1922, the *Queanbeyan-Canberra Advocate* correspondent heaped praise upon it: '*It is unquestionably a very fine piece of sculptural art and harmonises perfectly.*' Local political identities attended the ceremony and delivered addresses, quite happily ignoring the dictate from the War Memorial Advisory Committee that commemorative statues not be erected. And in Nelligen there is a white marble statue of a First World War Australian soldier with arms reversed mounted on a Bowral trachyte pedestal that was unveiled on New Year's Eve in 1920 by Mrs Middleton and Mrs Dayball, locals who each had two sons serve in the War.

It must be noted that by the time legislation was passed in late 1919 to establish this War Memorial Advisory Committee, many NSW towns had already started erecting their war memorials (the Central Tilba memorial being one of these which, because it was an 'obelisk in stone,' would have complied with the War Memorials Advisory Board's stipulations; it was unveiled on 12th December 1919), and others quite simply went ahead with their plans without consulting the Committee…and, whatever the Committee's rules and regulations may have been, there are some quite imaginative, very elaborate war memorials scattered around the state.

Bega has one of the most impressive war memorials. It conformed to the Committee's guidelines in two respects

Kiama's Memorial Arch

in that it was 'an arch over a public place' and a 'gateway to a public park.' It was modelled on the Arch of Constantine in Rome (erected in AD312 to commemorate Emperor Constantine the Great's victory at the Battle of Milvian Bridge) which was also the subject of a very popular painting at the same time as the Bega Soldiers' Memorial was being built, 'The Arch of Constantine Rome' by Janet Cumbrae Stewart.

Bega's Soldiers' Memorial was designed and built by Robert Thatcher, then Bega's most prolific builder.

Nowra's Soldiers' Memorial. (The sculpture in front of it, depicting an Australian serviceman standing free on his island home, with his rifle and helmet discarded and his country's freedom secured, honours Australians who served in World War II and later conflicts.)

The Memorial Arch in Kiama and the Shoalhaven Soldiers' Memorial Gates are two other South Coast examples of commemorative arches erected in a public park. Both were designed by leading architects of the time – Kiama's Memorial Arch by Sir Charles Rosenthal and Day, architects, (Sir Charles, described as having 'the physique of a gladiator and the heart of a lion', had been an extremely successful and very popular commander at Gallipoli and on the Western Front and, after the War, became President of both the Institute of Architects of NSW and the Australian Institutes of Architects) and the somewhat-unusual Soldiers' Memorial Gates in Nowra by Cyril Blacket (the first lecturer in architecture at Sydney University and the son of renowned Colonial Architect Edmund Blacket, and who had a wide range of business interests in the Shoalhaven area and had previously designed the Nowra School of Arts building).

One entirely appropriate, touching aspect about the Bega Soldiers' Memorial was that it was formally unveiled by the widows of the local men who lost their lives in World War I.

In addition to the War Memorial Advisory Committee there was another government body, a War Trophies Commission, that allocated 'war trophies' (things like captured German guns) for display as part of, or alongside, Australian war memorials. The Bega Memorial is flanked by two of these trophies.

In the case of Bermagui – which had been denied permission to build its memorial – it was allocated one light and one heavy machine gun, both captured by the 2nd Battalion, which were dispatched by steamer from Melbourne in October 1920 but then simply disappeared - so have never been a feature of that town's memorial (which, in any case, was not erected until 1974!)

Not every town immediately erected a war memorial. The War and associated topics such as conscription was quite a divisive subject in Moruya, for example, during the First World War years, and – despite some efforts in Moruya to have a memorial erected – it didn't happen. The town seemingly was quite war weary and ultimately disinterest prevailed when efforts were made to erect a permanent memorial to those who had enlisted and to those who lost their lives.

In some towns there was considerable opposition to erecting a memorial, the argument usually being that money that was to be spent on a public memorial could be better directed elsewhere. The poem by 'Hellfire Jack,' suggesting *'They'll rect a blinking monument – will that help the sojers' need? Will he admire ther monument when he's starving fer a feed?,'* objecting to the building of the substantial war memorial on Goulburn's Rocky Hill, is but one example of such opposition.

The original intent of war memorials, to honour those who served, was often overtaken by rivalry between towns – and even rivalry between committees that were responsible for the erection of these war memorials – as each strove to outdo the other with a bigger, better, more expensive, or more elaborate monument. At the opening of the Bega Soldiers' Memorial, the Mayor of Bega proudly described it as *'the finest of its kind in the State,'* before gratuitously adding that *'it is also indirectly a memorial to the committee which made it possible and to the man who built it.'*

Because war memorials were erected by local volunteer committees, the names they display (and even the spelling of some names, and decisions on whether to include the rank of those servicemen whose names are included) varies considerably from town to town. And, with the passing of time, it is now not always easy identifying the individuals whose names were recorded on local memorials – although considerable efforts have been made to do so recently, with interest in local war memorials having been rekindled by centenary of First World War commemorations.

Serviceman and women for World War II and subsequent conflicts have often been remembered by the simple expedient of adding additional plaques to World War I

memorials…or local RSL sub-Branches (often aided by funding from the Australian Department of Veterans Affairs) have, over the years, decided to erect new war memorials in various locations throughout the country. Memorials in Narooma (adjacent to the Narooma Club) and Merimbula (on the foreshore, just up from the Visitors Centre) are example of these.

Dotted around the country are some particularly interesting memorials. For example, in Tamworth the Waler Memorial commemorates Australian Troopers and their great horses, with the sculpture depicting an Australian Trooper saying farewell to his Waler. (Of the 121,000 Australian horses sent overseas in World War I only one returned, a gelding Sandy belonging to Major General Sir William Bridges who was killed at Gallipoli. The remaining horses were either killed in action, sold to other armies, or shot by a Trooper's mate, rather than be abandoned.)

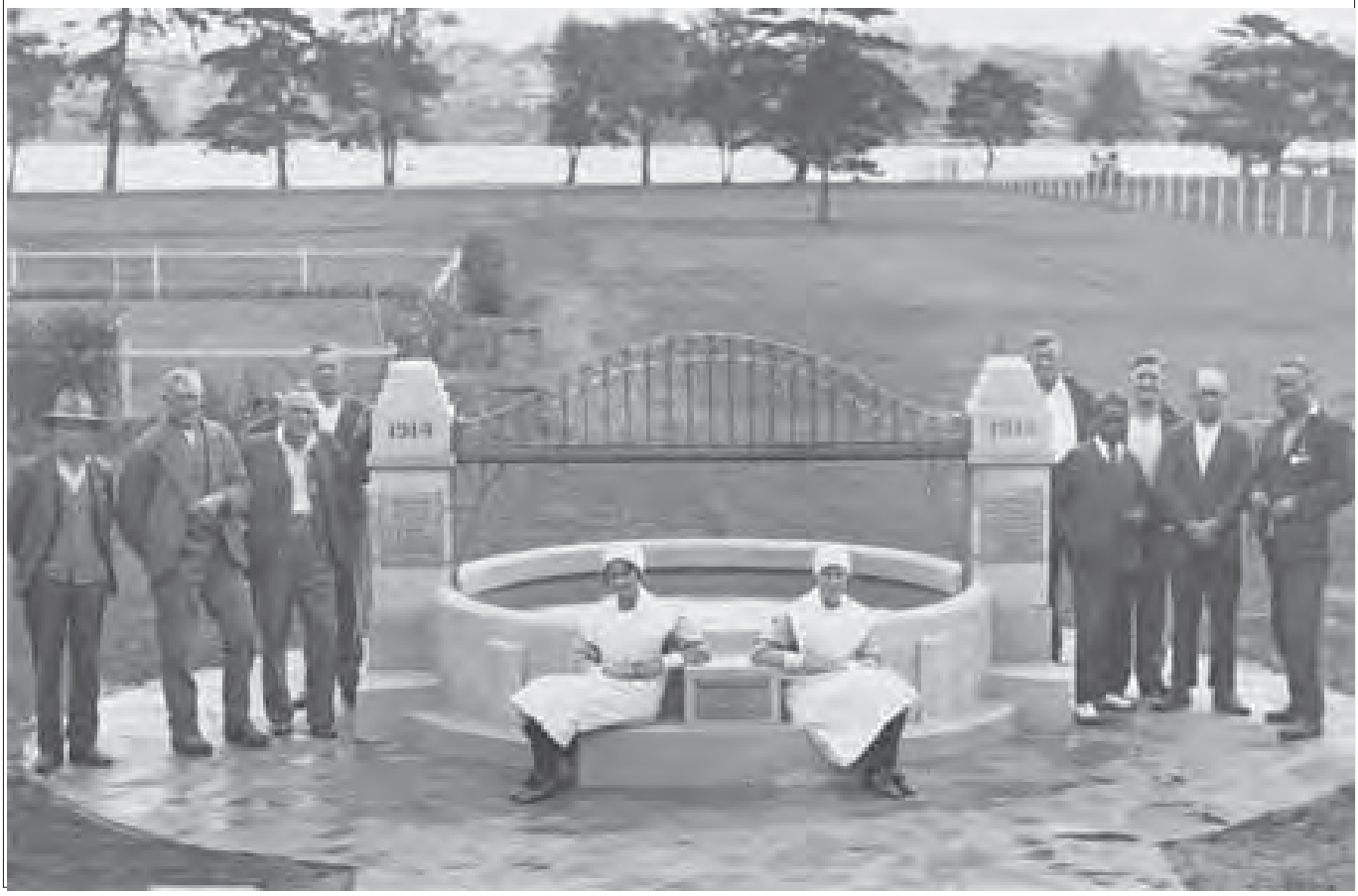
In Canberra, an Aboriginal Servicemen's Memorial Plaque is situated about 10 minutes' walk from the Australian War Memorial – quite insignificant in size and stature compared to the Australian War Memorial! (Over 1,000 indigenous Australians served in the Australian Army in World War I when they were simply considered, along with all other servicemen, as 'Australians' or 'British citizens'.)

A Sphinx and two Pyramids Memorial in Turramurra, Sydney, was hewn from local sandstone by Private WT Shirley (who was gassed on the World War I Western Front), whilst a resident of the nearby Lady Davidson Rehabilitation Hospital, between 1926 and 1928. The sphinx is a 1/8th size representation of the Great Sphinx at Gaza in Egypt and is a memorial to his fallen A.I.F. comrades.

And…

this is a World War I Memorial in Callan Park, Lilyfield, Sydney, unveiled in August 1931.

(An article that appeared in *Recollections*, Issue 5 provided the basis for the above)



The Soldiers' Monument

At the conclusion of World War I, local communities were considering whether and where to erect war memorials to honour those who served and those who had been killed in World War I. Predictably, some (a minority) argued the amount of effort and money that would be spent on war memorials could be directed to more worthwhile directions. In this poem that appeared in the *Goulburn Evening Penny Post* on 8th July 1922, 'Helfire Jack' emotionally and colourfully presents a dissenter's view. (Kenmore was a hospital for the insane in Goulburn):

Yer'll excuse, me, Mister Editor, cos I'm jest a common tramp.
I was readin' of yer paper, as I was lyin' in me camp,
Er bout this sojers' monument thet they is goin ter place
On Rocky Hill, or in ther park, but which in any case
Don't matter much; cos what I'm goin ter talk erbout, yer see,
Will not erfect ther monument in ther sojers' memory.

An all ther talk erbout ther site they'll put ther cussed thing
Would drive er blokle clean orf his nut, and trubble on him bring.
I couldn't listen to em long afore I'd git quite sore,
An then perhaps I'd end me days somewhere round Kenmore.
An as I do not wanter go ter that there blinking place
I'll tork erbout wat's on me mind and state me bloomin' case.

What gits me goat is why they wants er monument at all
Ter 'rect in memory of them what answered to ther call.
I dips me lid ter them ther men who stopped right over there–
They're better off than them what's back, cos they is free from care.

They face no blamed starvation, like them wot's home again,
An' though they sleeps right over there, we sleeps in th' Domain.

An wot I thinks wood be ther thing is look to them wot's back,
An if they did they'd find we'd be fewer on ther track.
Instead of buying monuments, buy some of us a feed
An give us work ter keep oursel's, don't leave us be in need,
Or if they wants to give ter them ther men who gave ther lives -
Look after what they left behind - by thet I mean ther wives.

And to ther blokes wat flapped ther flags to them what went away
And promised wat they'd do for them when they cum back sum day,
Wat have they done I'd like ter know.
Have they kept their promise well?
I thinks meself that they don't care if ther sojer goes to h_ll.
They'll rect a blinking monument - will that help the sojers' need?
Will he admire ther monument when he's starvin fer a feed?

Can they wonder that a sojer takes to stealing for a crust?
Whose fault is it, I'd like ter know, when steal he finds he must.
They stopped at home and made ther cash – he answered ter the call
They skited what they'd do all right, but the sojer did it all:
And now he's back at home again, he finds that life's a wreck;
And if he tries ter alter it – they'll git him in th' neck. R

The Ubiquitous Greek Cafe

Recently we received some recollections by Lily Castros, the daughter of Arthur Castros who once owned the Niagara Café in Bega, about Greek cafes in Bega. Her recollections provide a valuable insight into the role these cafes played in Bega, and some interesting glimpses of what Bega was like 'back then':

In 1907 Chris Nolan (Christos Goumenis) operated the Sydney Oyster Saloon in Carp Street. In 1913 Chris sold the business to a Mr. Sansey (Tsaousis) who combined it with the shop next door that had been Goetz's Produce Store and established the Sansey Dining Rooms. In the 1920s, Bill Cassimaty (Vassilis Cassimatis) bought the Dining Rooms and created the Niagara Refreshment Rooms.

Bill Cassimaty renovated the shop-fronts, modernised the interior, installed a pianola (with accompanying rolls) in the American fashion, and raised the tone of the establishment with silver tea services, silver cutlery, sugar basins and salt and pepper shakers.

In 1934 Arthur Castros (Athanasios Castrisos) purchased the Niagara and reduced its size by letting the eastern shop to a grocer, Mr. Mitchell. But he extended its length with a new brick-built kitchen with a double oven and wood-fired stove beside a large pie-warming cabinet that was encircled by copper water pipes that passed behind the stove and provided a constant flow of boiling water, and also added a corrugated iron storeroom behind.

He installed a large refrigerated cream and mauve coloured 'soda fountain' (in the fashion of the American drug stores), and a refrigerated showcase for 'small goods' (delicatessen-style cold meats, devon and garlic sausages, saveloys and frankfurters). The soda fountain had receptacles into which fitted five-gallon tubular cans for ice-cream, milk and fruit juices. There were special compartments for various flavourings and, approximately in the middle and lording over this vast expanse of stainless steel, were three tall slim taps, two for the carbonated water (gassy soda water) for the ice cream sodas (spider drinks) and the other for ice-cold water. Adjacent were two circular washing-up sinks.

Along the mirrored back-bar were lined the glasses, the metal (many silver) shakers for the milkshakes, the electric mixers, and the glass dishes for the fruit salad, ice-creams and other ice-cream sundaes.

An improvised flat upstairs consisted of bedrooms, a bathroom and another small room which was my playroom when small, and later my study. It was approached by an external staircase from outside the kitchen's back door. I grew up there.

The Niagara was a microcosm of commerce.

On the street-front was a double glass door entranceway, with two large glass windows on either side; the one on the right displayed a collection of confectionery, with a special motif displayed on special occasions; the one on the left was stacked with pyramids of oranges, apples, bananas, etc.

On entering, there was a foyer with counters for retail shopping and beyond these, on the right, a row of brownish wood cubicles jutting into a wood-panelled and many-mirrored interior.

The menu was standard to most Greek country shops: mostly grills, ham and salad, fish and chips, sandwiches, pies. But the special luxury here was the fresh oysters from Mr. Hunter at Wapengo Lake. For supper, after the pictures, toasted sandwiches at the Niagara were the height of sophistication.

The picture theatre [the Kings Theatre further down Carp Street] and the various cafes, with their coloured lights and mirrors, gave a sparkle to a drab darkened town. Shops and offices closed at five thirty; banks at three o'clock;

pubs at six. On Saturday afternoon and Sunday, everything was shut except for the Greeks! I have a faint memory of an earlier time when, on Sunday, the shop opened at midday when church services had finished.

Coming to the Greeks' for a meal was, in most cases, a luxury for locals. They then experienced a sense of class, served on monogrammed crockery and etched silverware by uniformed waitresses, and courteously. The Greeks' ('the dagos') were expected to be open at all hours for their convenience…which they mostly were.

George Trefely and staff of the Niagara Café, Bega

During the 30s the girls were dressed in mauvey-khakish dress uniforms with cream collars and trims that matched the colours on the soda fountain along with matching peaked headbands featuring the initial N. The men wore double wrap-around dust coats of the same colour.

The tourist trade was also beginning. A few curious motorists braved deplorable roads, travelling up and down the coast. The first Neon sign on the far South Coast was installed vertically over the awning of the Niagara reading 'Café' – right on the Princes Highway that then passed along Carp Street.

Bega was also the centre of a large dairy district, isolated by distance, with no railway and very bad roads from other larger towns. The farms were not mechanised and were worked mainly by share farmers or employees. It was a poor town. And behind the Niagara Cafe, between the Co-op's corrugated storerooms, was an area where, until the late 1940s, horses, sulkies and drays were tied, whilst their owners visited town. This was most usually on Tuesday, stock Sales Day.

Back then we did not realise the circumstances in which we were living. In primary school, children came to school with bare feet. The wearing of tunics or school uniforms was very rare. The vast majority of children left school at age fourteen or on doing the Intermediate Certificate (after Year 3 of high school – what today is year 9) when the boys were often sent to work and live-in with another farming family.

In 1947, in my Leaving Certificate class, there were only 12 pupils. Five were locals from Bega, the others from surrounding areas, including one from Cooma. The closest other high school, with which we competed twice a year in sports and debating, was at Nowra. One weekend a bus load would travel to Nowra, and on another a busload would come to Bega. The students would be billeted in private homes.

There was another Greek café/refreshment room in Bega – the Neon, in an old wooden structure on the corner of Carp and Church Streets. In the 1930s it was owned by a John Caligeros, who sold it c1940 to Jack Cassimatis and Steve Filos (Triandafilos). It also has a soda fountain and sold the same items as the Niagara, but not smallgoods nor cakes and biscuits…and there was no silver service. It was furnished with tables and chairs, had a confectionary counter and a soda fountain, and sold fruit from the corner windows. In the mid-1940s they sold to Andrew Cassimatis (the brother of Jack) and John Petrohilos, two ex-servicemen. In turn, Andrew Cassimatis sold his share to his partner, Jack Petrohilos.

For a period in the 1940s there was a third Greek shop in Bega – a fish shop next to the Commercial Hotel and opposite the Post Office. It was owned by a larger-than-life character from the Greek island of Mytelini, George Kourahanis. By his own account, he was an ex-freedom fighter and a renowned smuggler (between the Greek and Turkish coasts). He had a sign put in the shop window reading 'I am pure Greek' and energetically threatened anyone giving him trouble that he would cut their abdomen horizontally: 'no doctor fix!' He cleaned and retailed fish, and generally serviced the lower end of town and the drunks. This was the time of the six o'clock swill, and drunks sitting in the gutters were a common sight.

George came to Bega as a cook at the Neon and eventually became cook at the Niagara.

There were unwritten rules, one of which was drunks were never to be served at the Niagara. Nor were Aboriginals (universally

referred to as 'the blacks'). Once my embarrassed father explained to me that the Aboriginals were treated most unfairly; they were human too, but the reality was that our customers would no longer patronise us if we served 'the blacks'. I do not remember ever seeing an Aboriginal walk down our end of Carp Street.

There were two other cafes/milk bars in Bega owned by locals: the Pioneer, which was directly opposite the Niagara, and the Manhattan which was opposite the King's Theatre. They served light refreshments, with the Manhattan benefitting significantly from the cinema's intermissions.

The Greek cafes practiced thrift and recycling. Old oils and fats that had been used in the deep fryers were converted into soap by adding caustic soda. Choice fruit from Sydney arrived in light wooden boxes with were then chopped and used for kindling in the kitchen stove and the chip-heater in the bathroom. And apples, oranges and pears were individually wrapped in tissue paper, which was re-used as toilet paper.

In the early days, my father made his own ice-cream and ice blocks from milk delivered daily by our local milkman, Mr Walkeley. (Later, deliveries came from Peters Ice Cream in large green insulated canvas carts that held one or two of the tubular containers packed with dry ice.) In summer, pineapples were crushed to make fruit juices. The scraps from the kitchen were collected by a pig farmer – and, I still wonder, do pigs eat oyster shells?

Quiet times were spent by the girls cutting up bruised and damaged fruit for fruit salads. And Saturday afternoons were mostly spent around a large kitchen table polishing the silver.

In World War II everything changed. There was austerity. Goods disappeared from the shelves – before the war there were a great many chocolate manufacturers and competition for customers was fierce (back then, no courting was possible without the gifting of chocolates), but all this was reduced to a Nestlé's 'Winning Post' selection. Men went into the army. Girls left Bega to work in munitions factories in the cities. Cigarettes and tobacco were rationed and went below the counter for sale to regular customers. The shop's hours were curtailed and a local, Mr. Jameson, became the main cook and Mrs. Grant worked the afternoon shift – a typical opportunity for a married woman that, in her case, later continued with a career at the Co-op.

George Trefely (Trefilis) came to Australia in 1938, served in the Australian Army during the war, and was then taken into partnership by his brother-in-law, Arthur Castros. He eventually took over the running of the Niagara and managed it until 1958/1959. During that time he married a local girl, Gloria Tussup.

George also sponsored his brother, Bill (Vasilis), and his wife Sophia to immigrate to Australia and to Bega. I believe the first public naturalisation ceremony in Bega was for Bill and Sophia Trefely, and that it was held in the CWA Rooms.

From the very early 20th century, Greek cafes/milk bars/ restaurants became a feature of almost every Australian town, and it is likely that Lily's recollections are similar of those of many who worked in these ubiquitous and distinctive businesses in country towns.

Top: The New York Café, Nowra
Above: The Red Rose Café, Nowra

Quite a number of Greeks arrived in Australia from America during the 1890s through to the early 1920s. Cafes and milk bars (and earlier than that, Oyster Saloons, that morphed into cafes and restaurants) provided them with attractive sources of employment: utilising food-preparation skills that many Greeks already possessed, providing regular incomes, the ability to maintain their family units, an independence from union restrictions that limited the employment of foreign labour, and potential economic mobility. And only a limited knowledge of English was needed.

What these Greeks brought to Australia was a fantasy of 'modern American culture' – a little bit of Hollywood, a little bit of American life that was being spread by the then-popular movies.

Portrayal of this 'modern American dream' was clearly evident in several ways:

In their names – the Niagara, the Manhattan, the Monterey, the New York, the Neon. Even names like the Red Rose and Blue Bird were selected because they displayed the café's association with American style confectionery brands.

In the food served – whilst plain Australian fare such as steak and eggs was often demanded by (and, therefore, served to) customers, more exotic American fare was available – hamburgers, milkshakes, ice cream sodas, sundaes. Window signage – such as 'American Ice Cream and Chocolates' – reinforced these 'American dream' offerings. (Greek food, though, was rarely available!)

In the exterior architecture of the cafes and restaurants – modernist Art Deco, so often chosen for Australian Greek cafes, reflected the-then modern preoccupation with 'machine, travel, speed' and echoed the architecture found in Greek-American Art Deco cafes. More specifically, the style of Greek-Australian Art Deco was Californian 'Streamline Moderne' Art Deco which was curvilinear, in contrast to the more angular European Art Deco.

In the 'dining experience' – customers could sit in booths, listen to a jukebox, know the drinks were being dispended from soda-fountains, be given 'silver service' by uniformed waitresses.

In their locations – often beside or opposite a picture theatre where the latest Hollywood film could be enjoyed.

Importantly, these Greek cafes provided communities with 'a local sense of community'. Unlike pubs, they were 'safe' places where whole families, where courting couples could comfortably gather, where business could be conducted…and, invariably, they were open when everything else in town was closed!

(Interestingly, whilst these Greek cafes and restaurants were community gathering places, the Greeks themselves often saw themselves as being 'in' their communities and not 'of' their communities. Lily recalls that when Jack Petrohilos sold the Neon Café their family left Bega, and similarly when George Trefelly sold the Niagara Café his family all moved to Sydney. This probably simply reflects the fact that these cafés demanded their whole families be working seven days and seven nights a week, fifty-two weeks of the year, so they never had any time to become part 'of' the community.)

Kiama's Greek café was the Mosckos Greek Café which the Kiama Library website describes:

Our fabulous Greek Cafe, the Mosckos Cafe, was owned by Constantinos (Con) Moscko, who arrived in Australia in 1913. Con was a very astute businessman and had many

cafes in the Southern Highlands and Sydney, and he could see the benefit of having one in Kiama, where there was the sea and fresh fish and produce were always available.

Con moved to Kiama in 1919 and purchased a business owned by the Holz family. He soon became known for his excellent food, cleanliness and great service.

In 1928, Con purchased the adjoining land to his business and built a huge modern cafe. This cafe soon became the hub of the social life in town (the cafe no longer exists, it is now the Kiama Newsagency).

The cafe had black and white floor tiles with long red runners. The windows and display cabinets were set in brass and the tables were marble-topped and could seat at least 60 diners.

You could order fresh lobster, prawns, fish and huge steaks from the menu. The bar was fitted with soda fountains and a large range of lollies and chocolates, along with a selection of cigars. Con made his own brand of ice-cream, which he eventually sold to Streets, and hence began the Streets Ice Cream Company.

Con married local girl Mary Hart, who was a dressmaker and had a shop in front of the cafe. Con would deliver morning and afternoon tea to Mary on beautiful china plates on a silver tray.

Mary and Con had three children, Penny, Anthony (Tony) and Maria. Con died in 1948, remembered for his beloved cafe and for his generosity towards the Kiama community.

Nowra had no fewer than 7 Greek cafés, including a New York Café and a Red Rose Café. They are credited with having introduced espresso and cappuccino coffee to the town.

And Moruya had the Red Rose Café which was opened in May 1922, just before the town's boom days between 1924 and 1931, when hundreds of quarry workers and their families moved to Moruya to quarry the granite for the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

It was built, owned and operated by Jack Caridas who purchased a saddlery site in the early 1920s and built three new shops including space for the Red Rose Café. Clarrie Chesher opened a grocery store next door and the third was home to Knight's shoe repairs and the Nader Brothers Menswear shop.

Jack Caridas became a well-known figure in town, not just for his café but also his rather portly physique. R

Local News, 100 Years Ago

This story started for me at the wonderful Candelo Show. I'd been explaining to visitors that South Coast History Society intended to add a section about South Coast women to the next edition of *Extraordinary Histories* and was looking for suggestions about women who might deserved to be featured.

'*This is probably not a story you're looking for, but please do a Trove search on 'ABC* (I've withheld the name, just in case my interpretation of the incident might concern any descendants)*, Kanoona, 1924' and let me know what you really think might have happened to the girl*', one visitor suggested.

I took the lass' advice. It turned out to be an intriguing *Trove* search, and it provided a fabulous example of what newspaper reports sometimes reveal and what newspaper reports sometimes omit. And, like the lass who suggested I look at this story, I now have my suspicions about what happened to the girl – but they, regrettably, are simply conjectures.

Let's start with this simple report in the *Cobargo Chronicle*:

ABC, aged 16, daughter of Mr. C, of Kanoona [between Bega and Candelo], *suicided on Sunday last by taking strychnine*.

Then there is a little more information in a report in the Adelaide *Daily Herald*:

GIRL TAKES STRYCHNINE.
LOVE AFFAIR BLAMED.

A message from Bega states that ABC (16), the daughter of a widow dairying on the Kanowna estate, died yesterday from strychnine poisoning. It is stated that she had been reprimanded regarding a man with whom she had been friendly.

That same story also appeared (at least) in the *Yass Courier,* The *Riverina Grazier* (Hay), *Beaudesert Times*, *The Sun* (Sydney), *Daily Witness* (Young), and the *Adelong and Tumut Express*. (That was not unusual back then. Local newspapers would often 'fill the space between the advertisements' with 'titbits' that were considered interesting that had been picked up from other newspapers throughout Australia.)

The *Bombala Times* (along with [at least] the *Delegate Argus*, *Tweed Daily* (Murwillumbah) and the *Braidwood Despatch and Mining Journal)* provided even more detailed information. And, this is where the story starts to become really interesting. (Additional paragraphing below has been added by me)

GIRL SUICIDES
Sad Tragedy at Kanoona

A very sad tragedy occurred at Kanoona, near Bega, on Sunday morning last, when a girl named ABC, aged 16 years, daughter of Mrs. C, who is working Mr. A.T. Stile' dairy committed suicide by taking strychnine.

The family went to the milking yard, about 5 a.m. on Sunday, deceased being left at the house to prepare breakfast, which she did.

After breakfast she said she was going down the paddock, but she was brought back.

She then said she was going to poison herself, but it was thought she was joking.

Later on, she went to a creek some distance from her home and when she returned she told her mother she had poisoned herself. She had a cup in her hand. Bega District Hospital was rung up and asked as to emetics and Condy's Crystals were administered. Dr. O'Reilly was also rung, but the poor girl died shortly after he arrived.

She asked her mother to kiss her, as she was dying, and she passed away apparently without pain.

The unfortunate girl was reprimanded by her mother some time back for keeping company with a man, and this is thought to have played on her mind.

It is a very sad affair, as the father, Mr. C., died only a year or so ago, leaving the widow and young family to carry on the dairy. A brother of deceased had left home before the tragedy for a day's fishing at Tathra, and while there he had a narrow escape from drowning by being washed off Cooper's Rock.

The family is very hard-working and respectable, and much sympathy is felt for them.

A packet of strychnine, used for rabbit poisoning, was kept in the mother's roof, and the girl must have obtained some of this.

Then there is a report containing even more detail in Candelo's *Southern Record and Advertiser* – Kanoona's local newspaper:

A sad tragedy occurred at Kanoona on Sunday, when ABC, 16-year-old daughter of Mrs C., committed suicide by taking strychnine. It appears from the evidence given at the inquest that the girl had been threatening to do away with herself for some little time, owing apparently to her mother's objections to her keeping company with a young man named Fred Jamieson, but naturally nobody took her seriously. It is a very sad affair, and much sympathy is felt for Mrs C and the family, who are well respected in the community.

100 years ago Kanoona would have been quite remote – certainly more than today's five, ten or fifteen-minute car journey to Wolumla, Candelo or Bega. There was a one-teacher school there, which ABC possibly may have attended.

As a 16 year-old girl, ABC would likely have been helping her recently-widowed mother work on the farm and provide for her family. So, when a young man arrived in the area and showed interest in her, it's unsurprising some sort of friendship could have resulted.

What we, unfortunately, don't know is exactly why her mother objected, and obviously objected strenuously, to ABC 'keeping company with this young man', nor do we know what 'keeping company' in this instance actually involved. But, for the Editor of the *Southern Record and Advertiser* to name the young man, and for multiple reports to record that the C. family was 'well respected in the community', suggests that their relationship went well beyond holding hands at a local dance…and that their liaison had become common knowledge (perhaps even a scandal!) within the

local community.

My suspicion (and it can only be a suspicion) is that 'keeping company' meant that the couple had had, or were having, a sexual relationship and that ABC was, or suspected she was, pregnant (that certainly would have 'played on her mind'!)…or even (which might have provided some 'justification' for his being named by the Editor of the local newspaper) that she had been raped by Fred Jamieson (and which, of course, in those days would have been reported as having been ABC's 'fault') and had then fallen pregnant.

The inclusion in newspaper reports that ABC 'asked her mother to kiss her' when on her death bed is not just attractive journalism, but suggests she wanted some reassurance that she had not been totally rejected by her family because of her apparent transgression and the shame it had brought to her 'well respected family'.

Old newspapers (then the principal source of local news and gossip) not infrequently include similar stories to this. Their reports are often all we now have about the 'news of the day' back then even if they don't always provide us with the complete details that we, ideally, would now like to have been given.

Peter Lacey

P.S. If you have any suggestions about South Coast women who deserve be included in this new section in *Extraordinary Histories*, please let us know. The women don't need to be famous, they don't need to have been pioneers. They just need to have interesting, perhaps unusual, stories.

Recollections is now in its eighth year, so we're currently undertaking a major review of its future. We're interested in gauging how many people actually read it. You obviously do, so would you PLEASE just email 'Read Recollections' now to **southcoasthistory@yahoo.com** Your response (or your non-response) will provide an important indication of the extent the magazine is valued by the community. If you want to add any other comments about *Recollections*, please feel free to do so. Thanks.

WANTED community-minded supporter(s)

The Bega District Band does a lot for the community – it performs (no charge) at many school fairs and other community functions, it takes Christmas cheer to local nursing homes & hospitals, it provides the buglers to play the Last Post at Anzac Day functions. It even supports a BAAD Band (the Bega All-Ages Development Band) to 'train up' tomorrow's musicians.

Its musicians generously and freely give of their time, they provide and maintain their instruments ... but, then, they're also all expected to be fundraisers - just to keep the band afloat!

Regrettably, its bandsmen and women are not expert fundraisers.

Meanwhile, the Bega District Band must raise $5,000 each year just to meet the costs of 'unimportant' things like the electricity, rates and insurance for the Bega Band Hall, like paying for the public liability insurance that's essential when performing in public places, like maintaining the Band Hall and Band uniforms, like buying scores for new pieces the Band needs to play.

So, we're now seeking several community-minded supporters who recognise the value to the community of the Bega District Band and who are prepared to help us meet these annual overheads ...perhaps for a week ($100), a month ($400), or (wouldn't it be great!) a whole year ($5000).

That sounds like YOU? If so, please call Jane NOW on 0409 076 140 or janewoolacott@gmail.com

'Monday Memories'

More historic photographs from Bega Valley Shire Council's 'Monday Memory' series on Facebook, with thanks to Bega Valley Shire Council Library:

Bega Showground Pavilion

Monday Memory No. 87

The brick Bega Show Pavilion at the centre of this photograph was opened in March 1905 and was described at the time as 'the finest show pavilion in New South Wales'.

Crowds mill at the entrance to the Pavilion while children enjoy a ride on a merry-go-round. Between the merry-go-round and the pavilion is another pleasure ride in action, possibly a large multi-person swing.

In 1908 there was a merry-go-round at the show, the *Bega Budget* newspaper reporting that: *'The merry-go round secured big patronage from adults as well as children and lots of the ladies were "giddy young things" when they alighted'.*

Women and girls are wearing white dresses, dressing up to attend the show. Hats are very popular with men, women and children.

'Agricultural, Pastoral and Horticultural Shows' have an important place in the economic and social life of Australian local communities. Local shows give district residents the chance to display their animals, farming and manufacturing skills. By viewing the animals and produce from around the district, producers are able to see high quality produce. Competitions with prize money encourage all entrants to 'do better next time' thus raising the standard of livestock and the agricultural, horticultural and manufactured produce of a district. Newspaper reports after the show detail the prize winners in every category.

Shows also had an important place in a district's social calendar with Show lunches, dinners and balls held on show days.

Photograph donated by Doreen Stafford

Pambula's Goldrush History

Monday Memory No. 73

The Pambula Goldfields, located south of the town and running close to Lochiel and Nethercote, hit their peak at the end of the nineteenth century and brought a rush of vitality to what had previously been a quiet farming town.

Newspaper articles from the time claim that it was hard to find accommodation in Pambula's two hotels, and that steamers ran to Merimbula and Eden twice a week, transporting prospectors from other parts of the country. Coaches would meet the boats at the two ports and carry them the rest of the way to Pambula.

In 1890, mining and share brokers were taking up offices in a building across from Robertson's Commercial Hotel, while land that was previously considered worthless was being sold for huge sums, with houses going up in all directions.

By 1900 the most productive years of the goldfields were in the past, but mining has continued sporadically in the years since, leaving behind many physical reminders of that feverish time, including the mine tunnel pictured with Trevor Godwin standing inside it.

Photograph supplied by Bega Valley Shire Library. Fairfax Photograph Archive collection ID 037-47, Photographer: Paul Mathews

Courting: an intimate history of love and the law

by Alecia Simmonds

After reading the first page and a half of this book, I was convinced it would be a compelling read.

On a squally autumn day in Sydney in March 1914, Beatrice Storey, a barmaid, sued Frederick Chapman, a farmer, for abandoning her on the day of their wedding. To be precise, she claimed £1,000 damages in the New South Wales Supreme Court for breach of promise of marriage, a suit that could be used to claim compensation for injuries arising from a broken engagement.

Beatrice had first glimpsed Frederick one year earlier from behind the bar at the Captain Cook Hotel. Cavalier, stocky and a 'spinner of yarns', he breezed into the pub 'smelling of horses and flashing his winnings'. He told her that he had been at the Moore Park races down the road. He also said that he was forty, wealthy and a widower. After a month of giddy infatuation, he presented her with a wedding ring and vowed that he would marry her.

Almost none of what he told her was true.

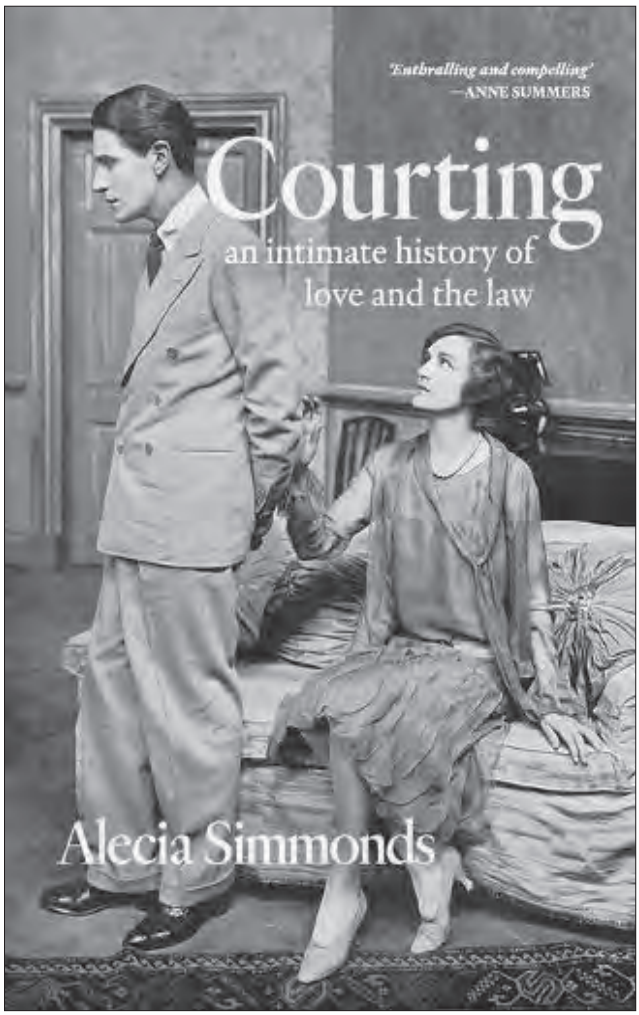
Beatrice explained from the witness box to the judge and a jury of four that she was thirty years old when she had quit her employment on Frederick's insistence and moved back home with her mother a few doors down on Flinders Street. Yes, she and Frederick had made wedding arrangements at St Barnabas' church on George Street: forty invitations were sent out; the wedding cake and carriage were ordered. She had selected furniture for their new home in Kensington, and he had promised to settle the property upon her as well as gifting her £2,000 to furnish the house. 'He said he had plenty of money,' she informed the court; 'in fact, "money to burn."' The day before the wedding, Frederick kissed Beatrice goodbye on the porch of her brother's house and told her not to be late for church.

Frederick never showed up for his wedding. He phoned Beatrice and apologised, asking her to cancel the ceremony as he had just received news that his wife was alive. The marriage would make him a bigamist. Beatrice was livid. Frederick rushed to her house and tried to console her, begging her to take the wedding ring, fumbling his way into an embrace, chaotically trying to kiss her. She pushed him away. In the following weeks Frederick turned to ink and paper, bewailing the maddening effects of passion, confessing that the reports of his wife were 'a yarn' and exhorting that it was his 'greatest wish to marry'. Beatrice converted Frederick's love letters into legal evidence and his passion into proof, in one of the most lucrative breach of promise actions of her decade: £350 compensation for her 'lacerated feelings'.

The next time Beatrice and Frederick appear on the historical record is 23 January 1915 at St Martin's Anglican Church in Kensington. This time Frederick showed up for his wedding.

A little under sixty years later, in the early 1970s, a grandson of Beatrice and Frederick was also sued for breach of promise of marriage, just before the action was abolished. No newspaper bothered to report it, and we only know of the action because in 1986 a Liberal politician, Wilson Tuckey, raised it in federal parliament. 'Paul had a girl called Christine,' he hissed, directing his comments at a Labor MP named Paul, also implying (incorrectly) that an illegitimate child had been born. 'Madame Speaker', the Labor MP interjected. He demanded that Tuckey be censured. He railed against him, calling him a criminal. Later that day, the Labor MP held a press conference outside Parliament House to

address the remarks and asked that they be erased from the Hansard minutes. This Labor MP, the grandson of Beatrice and Frederick, was the future Australian prime minister Paul Keating.



Dr Alecia Simmonds is a senior lecturer in law at the University of Technology Sydney. What she has done is to identify almost 1,000 legal cases from court records of women and men in NSW who sued for 'breach of promise' and to then use a number of these cases to illustrate how 'courting' (and its social and legal implications) changed and evolved from the earliest days of settlement until the early 1970s.

It is an absolutely fascinating study – fascinating because those 'rules of courting' were just so different 'back then' (and were even dramatically different in different eras 'back then', and were also dramatically different for different social classes) to what they are today, or even were when I [back in the late 1960s and early 1970s] was 'dating'. (In the early twentieth century 'dating' - something with a completely different set of 'rules' – was added to the established and traditional way of 'courting'.)

And the cases that Alecia dissects (perhaps, at times, with a little too much legal clinicality!) are simply fascinating in themselves – like the 1825 breach of promise of marriage case of *Cox v Payne* in which the young, leading barrister of the time, William Charles Wentworth, (successfully) sought damages for Sarah Cox, a seamstress 'possessing of some attractions'…but Wentworth did not just accept her brief, he also had her in bed (or, perhaps, she had him in bed ??), got her pregnant, and ultimately married her. W.C. Wentworth went on to enjoy the highest of social status in the colony, but not Mrs W.C. Wentworth who was thereafter completely shunned by society because 'she had lost all claims to respectability' by giving birth to an illegitimate child (even to the extent of having to politely decline an invitation to a Queen's birthday ball at Government House from Governor FitzRoy many years later in 1847, because the issuing of the invitation created a furore among others who received invitations: they wanted to 'preserve our wives and daughters safe from the contagion they [women with 'doubtful reputations', such as Sarah] might spread').

The Australian government removed the possibility of suing for breach of promise of marriage in 1976. But, towards the end of her book, Alecia Simmonds ponders whether a reform of the law might not have been preferable: *with the expansion of digital technologies and online dating services in the twenty-first century, the need for the law to regulate romance – a realm populated by smiling wolves – has possibly never been more urgent…the law's self-declared reluctance to intervene in romantic, sexual or familial contexts (is) one that, in refusing to punish, ends up condoning the behaviour of liars and frauds.*

Anyone with any interest in how society changes and evolves (even over the relatively short time span of under 200 years) will find '*Courting*' engrossing. And anyone requiring proof about how 'liberated' Australian women have become over the same period need look no further than what is revealed in this intriguing collection of historic judicial snapshots. But, whilst reading '*Courting*', do expect to be continually exclaiming to yourself 'Oh! I didn't know that!'

Courting' is available in paperback from around $35.

Readers Responses

We greatly value feedback from readers of *Recollections*.

Our commentary/opinion piece in the last *Recollections* on 'How NOT to Organise a Successful Referendum' prompted a range of responses, from those suggesting '*I don't think I've ever read a more comprehensive and sensible article on why the Yes vote failed*' to one, from a reader who was clearly very disappointed with the referendum result, suggesting (without providing anything to support the assertion) that it was '*an article driven by political bias and racism*'.

Another reader more-thoughtfully suggested '*Your article on the failure of the Voice referendum was interesting, but I disagree that the failure was due to the inability to run a successful campaign. This could possibly be argued if one regarded it as a political campaign to be run.*

A referendum, however, should not be about a political campaign, but should be about people being able to decide which is the best way to change the Constitution (or not) to achieve (in this case) a better outcome for Indigenous Australians.

It failed because it was turned into a political football – an attempt by one side of politics to score political points over another, regardless of the merit or otherwise of the subject.

I do agree with your assertion that the use of misinformation was a contributor to a proportion of NO votes. In fact, I suggest it was the main element in the success of the NO vote. I don't agree with your implication that a "significant information void", including no details on how the Voice would function, allowed the spreading of misinformation. The information provided by the YES case was clear and accurate, but many chose to misinterpret and distort it. Misinformation was spread, regardless of what the YES advocates said or didn't say. It was used as a political weapon. In this case one side of politics, for all of the wrong reasons, launched a campaign to spread misinformation and outright lies about what would happen if the referendum were to be passed. This misinformation was loud and it was heard by many who had not really engaged with the process.

Others also expressed similar dismay or disgust at 'one side of politics spreading misinformation and outright lies', and this was perhaps the major recurring point expressed by correspondents.

We, however, particularly liked an observation that the article should be viewed as both historical and political in nature…with this being accompanied by a plea to us to '*please just stick to the history in future, as I'm completely over politics!*'

Nowra's Fleet Air Arm Museum

If you are driving north on the Princes Highway from Ulladulla or Batemans Bay, there is a road on your left, just before you reach South Nowra – BTU Road (BTU meaning Base Torpedo Unit) - with a sign pointing to a Fleet Air Arm Museum.

It's well worth turning into this road and spending a couple of hours at the Museum. It's a really excellent museum – on a much smaller scale (because it only features aircraft utilised by the Australian Navy) but every bit as interesting as the mammoth and renowned Imperial War Museum Duxford in the UK. But, unlike IWM Duxford, the Fleet Air Arm Museum has no admission charge.

A huge hanger houses a couple of dozen Australian Navy aircraft – fixed wing aircraft and helicopters – and several models of Australian naval vessels. They are impressively displayed, roughly in the order in which they were used by the Navy (so starting with a World War I Sopwith Camel Pup progressing though, ultimately, to Sea Hawk and Squirrel helicopters), and excellent information is provided about each craft on display.

They say, in the Air Force, the landing's OK,
If the pilot can step out and still walk away.
But in the Fleet Air Arm, the prospect is grim
If the landing is poor and the pilot can't swim.

The hanger was erected on a huge concrete slab that was originally a 'dummy deck', or training facility where aircraft carrier flight procedures could be practiced. Over $8-million was raised by volunteers in the 1980s to enable the hanger to be built.

So why is this fantastic Australian Fleet Air Arm Museum here on the South Coast?

Quite simply, because it is part of *HMAS Albatross*.

HMAS Albatross (although it didn't get this name until 1948) was constructed as an advanced operating base for the Royal Australian Air Force from 1939, was transferred to the Royal Navy in 1944 when it became known as *HMS Nabbington*, reverted back to become a RAAF base in 1946, before ultimately becoming a Royal Australian Naval Station and base for the Australian Air Fleet Arm in 1948.

The first 600 carrier landings are frightening.
But then you settle down!

HMAS Albatross has been home to, and has been a service and support base for, 30 different aircraft types that, apart from having played a significant role in Australian defence, have provided even more-active civilian search and rescue and disaster relief roles in recent times.

In the early 1970s, a group of enthusiastic Navy Aviation personnel started collecting aviation relics from around *HMAS Albatross*. In 1974 a project was initiated to establish a RAN naval aviation museum and this ultimately led to the building of the Air Fleet Arm Museum in the 1980s.

Today, this museum dramatically showcases the history of Australian naval aviation and of the development of the Royal Australian Navy's Fleet Air Arm.

The Fleet Air Arm Museum is open from 10am to 4pm on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.


5
9


NAVY
NAVY
800


NAVY 20
NAVY 36
NAVY 25
NAVY 30
NAVY 14
NAVY 10
NAVY 26
NAVY 19
NAVY 33


ROYAL AUSTRALIAN
89
98
VILLAGE HALL