

Real to Reel

Newsletter of Oral History Tasmania Inc.
(formerly the Tasmanian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia)
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CONTENTS

News from the Executive – Jill Cassidy	1
President’s Report – Jill Cassidy	2
Audited Financial Statement	3
After the Walk-off: collecting a history of the Wave Hill settlement and Wattie Creek, 1966–1986 – Charlie Ward	4
Telling it how the Walk-off was: Managing Voices, Memories and Relationships – Charlie Ward	7
New books	11

NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE – Jill Cassidy

Seminar and AGM

The annual seminar on August 5 was a very successful day, with three particularly interesting speakers and lots of chat. At the Annual General Meeting there were no other nominations so the existing committee members, including the executive, were re-elected unanimously. The proposed constitutional change, allowing the AGM to be held as much as four months after 1 July, was also passed; this will give the committee more flexibility in choosing the seminar date. The President’s Report and Audited Financial Statement are included in this newsletter on pages 2 and 3.

Oral History Australia National Conference

Don’t forget that registrations are still being received for the national conference which will be held from 13 September in Sydney. All details can be found at:

<http://www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au/oha-biennial-conference.html>

Conference scholarship

Congratulations to Rena Henderson on being the recipient of the scholarship to attend the national conference. No applications had been received at the time of the last issue of *Real to Reel*, but Rena approached us saying that she had had to wait until her application to study for a Ph.D. was approved before applying. Rena will benefit greatly from the conference and the committee had little hesitation in awarding her the scholarship. No doubt all members will look forward to reading her account in the December issue.

Wave Hill walk-off

The main articles in this edition of *Real to Reel* are about the Wave Hill Indigenous walkout and its aftermath. Although it is not specifically Tasmanian it is a very important Australian story and as it deals with such interesting oral history issues it is good to make it available to a wider readership.

* * *

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2016–2017

Jill Cassidy

It gives me great pleasure to present the President's report for 2016–2017.

In September 2016 we held a very interesting seminar in conjunction with the Launceston Historical Society, with close to a record attendance. Brad Williams threw light on his work on the *Archaeological dig at Launceston College/Gaol*. His excavations revealed that the College's proposed Performing Arts Centre straddled the very earliest part of the gaol stemming from 1825, and we were privileged to get a preview of the College plans to embrace their heritage. I spoke on the topic: *Oral History: What's all the fuss about?*, looking at the reasons behind the many and varied uses of oral history in books, radio, television, exhibitions and the internet. Finally, Margaretta Pos explored the unpublished diaries of her great-great-great grandmother in *My Journey with colonial pioneer Elizabeth Fenton* which included her time in India.

Later in the year as part of Seniors Week at the Launceston LINC I spoke to a large group of people of all ages interested in interviewing relations while researching family history. Finally, in May was the customary oral history workshop, held this year in the newly-redeveloped Glenorchy LINC which now provides an excellent location for the south. The wide range of participants discussed many oral history issues and several participants became members.

It has recently become clear that it would be valuable to have a large sign for events so we employed graphic designer Louise Thrush to design a retractable banner. The committee was delighted with her design and the colourful banner proved its worth at the workshop in directing participants to the right room.

Over the year we were able to place the remaining issues of *Real to Reel* on the website, joining the post-2008 editions. The earliest editions, in some cases consisting of just one page, did not survive in electronic form and needed to be scanned. Later ones had been printed in an A5 format and many thanks are due to Elaine Crisp who reformatted them to suit the A4 layout suitable for converting to a pdf. Now all issues from 1991 onwards are available and their content is searchable by search engines.

We are delighted that member Rena Henderson applied for the scholarship which we offer every two years for someone to attend the National Oral History conference, which this year will be held in Sydney. We try to encourage people to explore the possibilities of oral history and the scholarship will assist Rena to pursue her PhD studies.

At this Annual General Meeting the committee is proposing a small change to the constitution. It was difficult to choose a date for this year's seminar which did not clash with other events including the National conference. The option of postponing the seminar till October was not possible because the constitution requires us to hold the Annual General Meeting 'within three months' of the last financial year, so the proposal is to change the wording to 'within four months'. This will keep all options open.

After several years Elaine Crisp had to resign from the committee due to work commitments, and while we regretted her loss we are delighted that Tasmanian newcomer Jen Thompson agreed to replace her. I wish to thank them both along with Alison Johnston who has continued to take the minutes, Lana Wall who as treasurer keeps track of the finances, and the rest of the committee: Terry Fritsche, Andrew Parsons, Leonie Prevost and Pauline Schindler. And as always I would like to thank the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery for its continued support.

* * *

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

Oral History Tasmania Inc <i>For the year ended 30 June 2017</i>	Notes	2017 \$	2016 \$
Receipts			
Equipment hire		120	300
Interest received		24	25
Membership		1,475	1,265
Sale of handbooks		158	264
Seminar/AGM		156	450
Term deposit interest		277	287
Workshop		510	230
Total Receipts		2,720	2,821
Payments			
Audit fee		100	100
Equipment		244	143
Executive expenses		297	140
Filing fees		61	59
Handbooks		229	-
Insurance - equipment		558	448
National conference		900	-
OHAA capitation fees		465	465
Scholarship		897	-
Seminar/AGM costs		36	252
Website		816	455
Workshop		297	118
Total Payments		4,900	2,180
Net (deficit)/surplus for the year		(2,180)	641
Accumulated funds at the beginning of the financial year		14,416	13,775
Accumulated funds at the end of the financial year		12,236	14,416
Represented by:			
Commonwealth Bank - cheque account		4,717	5,174
Mystate Financial - term deposit		7,519	9,242
		12,236	14,416

I have examined the financial records and supporting documents of Oral History Tasmania Inc for the year ended 30 June 2017.

I report as follows:

I have obtained the information required.

The attached accounts are properly drawn up so as to exhibit a true and correct view of the financial position, according to the information at my disposal and the explanations given to me.

The rules relating to the administration of the funds have been observed.

Date: 29 July 2017

Name: Phillip James Brown

Signed:



AFTER THE WALK OFF: COLLECTING A HISTORY OF THE WAVE HILL SETTLEMENT AND WATTIE CREEK, 1966–1986

Charlie Ward

Reprinted with permission from the autumn 2013 issue of Word of Mouth, the newsletter of OHA SA/NT.

For many years now I have been obsessively researching the history of an area where I lived and worked during 2004–06: Kalkaringi in the Northern Territory, formerly known as the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement. My interest in the history of the Welfare Settlement and its nearby neighbour Wattie Creek (now Daguragu) is focused on the 1960s–80s. During those decades significant changes occurred that affected the local Gurindji people.¹ The most profound of these was a change wrought by the Gurindji themselves when they terminated the feudal relationship to which they had been subject for eight decades through their ‘Wave Hill Walk-off’ protest in 1966. Before their drastic action, the majority of Indigenous people in the area lived and worked on the British Vestey company’s Wave Hill Station. From the time of the Walk-off, it took ten years of hard work before the Gurindji gained government support sufficient to establish the permanent community they desired – Daguragu, at Wattie Creek. It was a further ten years before the local people gained freehold title over their land in 1986. This ended two decades of unprecedented change and saw the circumstances of the Gurindji’s lives changed forever. Loosely speaking, the features of community life currently common were implemented by the mid-80s, at least until the system of governance by a Gurindji community council was dismantled by the Northern Territory Labor Government in 2008 as part of its introduction of large ‘super-shires’.

In 2008 and 2011 I received Northern Territory History Grants from the Northern Territory Government to assist me in my work. Since then, I have interviewed approximately 60 people regarding one aspect or another of recent Gurindji history, from distinguished federal public servants to draft resisters, shop-keepers and contract musterers. These individuals are now scattered all over the continent. Although there is radical divergence of opinion among my interviewees (which I shall describe later) on political and personality issues, they are united by their enthusiasm for the country and people of Wave Hill. This is something that anyone who has interviewed old time Territorians would know well – the rawness and excitement of life on the frontier and the endearing qualities of its residents engender lifelong affections. Many are the times I’ve heard comments like, ‘They were the best years of my life’, or, ‘Ah, dear, I miss those people’.



*Figure 1. Young residents of the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement, 1970
Courtesy Charlie Mines*

Earlier in my project, I believed that I was researching Indigenous history, though after a time I came to question how the transcultural encounters that gave rise to the Gurindjis’ communities could be described as an Indigenous history alone. I prefer now to think in terms of ‘local’ history, or ‘political’ history, with the Gurindjis occupying the key role. I also had to accept that the majority of the oral history I could do was with non-Indigenous former residents of the area, due to the tragic discrepancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancies, compounded by the

¹ For convenience sake, the term ‘Gurindji’ is used here to refer to the Indigenous residents of Wave Hill Station, the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement (later Kalkaringi) and Wattie Creek (later Daguragu). In actuality, Gurindji people as well as Nyining, Mudburra, Ngarinyman, Ngaliwurru, Bilinearra, Warlpiri and others reside in the area.

fact that many of my interviewees were then young adults working with Gurindji elders. After interviewing the last of the Gurindji men associated with the leadership of the Walk-off and contemporary Gurindji leaders, I addressed the task of identifying – and then locating – dozens of the nurses, policemen, teachers, community advisors, adult educators, settlement managers and town clerks who had called Kalkaringi ‘home’ over the years. Archival records were invaluable for the first part of the task and the electoral roll made the latter possible.

An early challenge was locating Bill Jeffrey, the Welfare Officer who assisted Frank Hardy to petition the Governor-General for land in 1967. Given that his contribution to the Walk-off was well recognised, I found it remarkable that nobody had any idea about where he had gone subsequently. His was a particularly difficult case to crack. The reason for this became clear when – perhaps through sheer bloody-mindedness – I located his children, and learned that the information he provided about himself to Frank Hardy (repeated in Hardy’s book *The Unlucky Australians*) and in his subsequent public appearances was untrue. In *The Unlucky Australians*, Jeffrey had woven his identity around a childhood spent on the North Queensland with his racist and violent father and uncles.² In contrast, I learned that ‘Wild Bill’, as he liked to be known, grew up in a working class Methodist family in suburban Melbourne.³

My most recent research foray comprised an 8000-kilometre drive from the ACT across Queensland in October–November 2012. I found my elderly interviewees on outback cattle stations, in Bundy Rum cane towns, ‘Truman Show’-style retirement villas, country town cafes and tropical fruit orchards. I pulled my HPU (History and Policy Unit) panel van up for the night by salt-flats, bore-troughs and rubbish tips, and shared my camp with cane toads underfoot and possums on the roof. At one stage I was forced by bushfires to cancel an interview and re-route hundreds of kilometres, only to be stymied the next day by roads made impassable by rain.



Figure 2. Welfare Officer Bill Jeffrey, c.1967. Courtesy Robin Jeffrey

My most rewarding Queensland interviews were with former public servants active in Indigenous (then Aboriginal) Affairs. These men joined the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Administration half a century ago, when both the government’s expressed agenda towards Indigenous Territorians and the situation of the same differed radically to those of today. These young public servants had accrued what was regarded as relevant experience in the then-Australian colony of Papua New Guinea, or in Dutch Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The Aboriginal people they encountered in the Welfare Settlements where they were deployed were in many cases the survivors of lethal early twentieth century settlement conflicts. Despite their relocation to government-run settlements, they lived full ceremonial lives, practising aspects of traditional law that are often understood in theory rather than practice today.

In 1972 the Welfare Branch was demolished by the incoming Labor Government of Gough Whitlam. Afterwards, my interviewees transferred into the new Department of Aboriginal Affairs, with its radically different policy rubric. The remarkable experiences that my interviewees had, the fondness with which they

² Hardy, Frank, 1968, *The Unlucky Australians*, Melbourne, Nelson Publishing, [2006 edn, Melbourne, One Day Hill], pp. 102–103.

³ Ward, Charlie, 2012, *Red Truths and White Lies: Frank Hardy and Bill Jeffrey at Wave Hill*, <http://griffithreview.com/edition-36-what-is-australia-for/red-truths-and-white-lies>. Accessed 11 February 2013.

remember the local people – and even, in some cases, their languages – make the short-term contracts of modern staff in relatively staid and cynical communities seem pale in comparison. As such the experiences of my interviewees seem highly relevant to today's largely ahistorical debates about Indigenous Affairs.

Interviews on these matters formed the highlights of my trip, though the occupational hazards of road-based interviewing also featured heavily. My trusty laptop sustained an irreparable fracture between Queensland's gemfields and its northern coast. While enjoying a break in 'secure parking', the HPU's security was breached and the 'perps' made off with essential tech equipment and my partner's clothing (she had joined me for the holiday leg of the trip). Worse was yet to come. After a very rewarding interview near Kingaroy with a retired ringer and head stockman from Wave Hill Station, I drove several hundred kilometres, only to be informed that I'd left my digital recorder's charger on his lounge room floor. I didn't take this gracefully, as I had several more interviews to conduct on my way home, and did not fancy the idea of an extra day's back-tracking to pick it up. As I've never had occasion to use the device's back-up battery pack, I had left it at home.

Take note.

I resolved to see if I could purchase a generic charger to see me through my remaining interviews. In a town west of Brisbane I went into an electronics shop. My hopes were buoyed as the 'expert' staff examined different chargers for their suitability – before destroying my trusty recorder before my eyes.

After collecting, the challenges of this work become historiographic. As with every remote place where numerous non-Indigenous people are sequestered for long periods, tensions often arose at the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement, and deep and bitter enmity also grew in some instances. Forty years after these events, it becomes a challenge when the contradictory and even derogatory accounts of two individuals are recorded and an attempt at a single 'true' history is made. Oral history is notoriously imprecise – I usually find now that I have a more accurate knowledge of dates and names than my informants – but to me the accounts of my interviewees, even if inaccurate at times, are invaluable to my attempt to write a detailed and lively history, as the case of Tony Scott illustrates.



Figure 3. Tony Scott, 2012. Photographer Charlie Ward

Tony was a Welfare Officer at Wave Hill in 1969. This year was critical to the development of the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement. The federal coalition government of John Gorton had by then announced that their response to the Gurindji's Land Rights request was that they would build a large number of fancy and expensive houses at the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement. By implication the Gurindji camp at Wattie Creek – and the bogey of Land Rights – would disappear. This deepened the vitriolic and entrenched conflict over Aboriginal policy issues in Canberra between the radical Council for Aboriginal Affairs (CAA) and the more conservative Northern Territory Administration and the Welfare Branch. Paradoxically, 1969 was a challenge to learn much about. Locating records from the period was fruitless: southern

activists did little at Wattie Creek that year, and the records of the Gurindji's Darwin-based supporters were almost non-existent. This changed when I spoke to Tony, who provided me with a vivid account of the situation on the ground. Before his departure, he had received strict orders from his Welfare Branch superiors in regards to the politically controversial events and personalities at Wattie Creek:

I'd been instructed in Katherine what I could do – it was very restrictive. I was under no circumstances to go to Wattie Creek, and I was under no circumstances to allow any Welfare Branch vehicle to go to Wattie

Creek. I don't know if [Regional Officer, Alex] Bishaw was embarrassed or not, but he almost had to read the riot act.

No persons of the NT union movement, the NSW unions [were allowed]. Any uninvited persons should be reported to the police ... [The directive] gave a list of all the people who were not allowed on Welfare property. I read it when I got there and I thought, 'This is bullshit, I'm a prisoner already'.

More than perhaps anyone else in the country, Tony felt the effects of the hugely polarised, Gurindji-inspired debate on Land Rights. Elsewhere the debate was largely theoretical, about ethics and politics. He experienced the resulting impasse first-hand:

Every fortnight, I'd get a message saying: 'Canberra [representatives of the CAA] to arrive on x day' ... They used to go to Wattie Creek and talk to the people there, then they'd come back and say, 'You're doing this, you're doing that, that's good,' and they'd lay down what we should do for the next month or so because they were happy with the way things were progressing.

The following week Katherine or Darwin [Scott's superiors in the Welfare Branch] would arrive unannounced. They'd say, 'What are you doing this for? Why are you doing that?'

Technically the Canberra people [the CAA] weren't in a position to make any rules... It was so stressful! That is why I turned white – I had hair darker than you; in six months it was snow white!

Tony's tenure with the Welfare Branch was short-lived, but several years later he had an experience that provided pure gold from a historian's perspective. By coincidence, he was employed in a meatworks owned by the Vestey company. The Vestey family prided itself on the secrecy with which it conducted its affairs for the last century. Once the biggest pastoral landholder in northern Australia, the records from all their northern cattle stations were destroyed on their departure in the 1980s. Lord Vestey, on a tour of his family's assets, struck up a dinner conversation with his young employee, and gave an off-the-record account of his company's dealing with the Australian government regarding the excision of land for the Gurindji – then the nation's most significant test case for the unresolved problem of Aboriginal Land Rights. Tony Scott's account of Vestey's comments complements and confirms – in some cases – the guesswork that characterised the media and the activists' discussion of the issue at the time.

In such cases, oral history clearly adds much of value to the archival record. From my perspective, the value of oral history in understanding the place of the Gurindji's Land Rights campaign in the history of Aboriginal Affairs cannot be overstated.

TELLING IT HOW THE WALK-OFF WAS: MANAGING VOICES, MEMORIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Charlie Ward

Reprinted with permission from the autumn 2017 issue of Word of Mouth, the newsletter of OHA SA/NT.

This article includes names and images of Aboriginal people who have passed away.

Deciding to collect all the oral history I could regarding the aftermath of Australia's best known 'Walk-off' strike by Indigenous stockmen and their families led me on my own long journey. I have previously recounted the physical trials and tribulations of conducting approximately 100 interviews about the Wave Hill Walk-off and its outcomes. Outback journeys, mechanical and climatic disasters, and the joys and hazards of interviewing itself enriched my life over an eight-year period. Together, these adventures (to which I later added calls to Albany, Broome and Adelaide) imbued me with the sense that while the stories I was collecting belonged to their tellers, the broader history they uncovered belonged to the land itself. This was appropriate perhaps, for with its themes of Indigenous stoicism, British colonial exploitation and the indifference and obfuscation of the settler state, the Gurindji people's 1966 Walk-off from the remote Wave Hill Station remains quintessentially Australian.

Recognising this, the Gurindji people's primary publicist at the time, Frank Hardy, named his superlative 1968 account of the Walk-off *The Unlucky Australians*. At a time when Indigenous Australia remained largely out of sight and out of mind, oral history from the Walk-off's protagonists formed the backbone of Hardy's book. With his recorder, Hardy was among the first on the ground after the Gurindji's shock action, giving the hitherto silenced stockmen the opportunity to 'speak from below', behind enemy lines.

The recordings he made of Vincent Lingiari, Captain Major Lupngagiari, Dexter Daniels, 'Wild Bill' Jeffrey and others, now held in the National Library of Australia, were recorded in the shadow of the isolated Wave Hill Welfare Settlement. The enormous holdings of the pastoral industry – from which the Gurindji had fled – sprawled for hundreds of kilometres beyond the ringed horizon. Hardy's recordings hiss and surge, labouring under the weight not just of primitive conditions and equipment, but also with the audible buzz of excitement that in the very act of recording the Gurindji, Hardy was breaching a century of silencing and violent erasure by Europeans. Via Hardy's transgression – taking himself to the temporal and topographic edge of the pastoral frontier in the wet season of 1966–67, tape recorder in hand – the Gurindji men stepped into the settler society's public domain as complete, storied humans for the first time. The political potency not just of oral history but of 'witnessing' and testimony itself is revealed.

As a young-ish man arriving half a century after Hardy, it seemed to me that the story of the Gurindji's fortunes at the hands of White Australia needed updating. The result of this is my book, *A Handful of Sand: the Gurindji Struggle, After the Walk-off*. When Frank Hardy's son Alan launched *A Handful of Sand* at the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Walk-off at Kalkaringi in August 2016, he concurred, and kindly suggested I was the right person for the job.

Yet oral history's practice has changed since Hardy's day. Unlike Hardy's interviews, those I conducted were accompanied by a welter of talent release, permission forms and rights agreements. Moral custodians required convincing that my interviews wouldn't maim or injure anyone by design or accident, and that if they did, I would have therapeutic resolution on hand for the victims. Even though Gurindji people are frequently interviewed by documentarians and journalists, a university ethics committee advised me that my proposed research should take greater care of the 'cultural and spiritual wellbeing of the Kalkaringi' [sic]. At least in seven years (then) of intermittently working with them, I hadn't mistaken my interviewees' language for their postal address.



Figure 4. Vincent Lingiari and Little Blanchie Jingaya with calf, 1974. Photograph: Rob Wesley Smith

In fact, when I wrote this book, what could be called the 'cultural and spiritual wellbeing' of *all* my interviewees was high on my mind. I am naturally risk averse, and idealistic to boot. Peace and love would prevail between me and my interviewees – or so I hoped. Among the Gurindji people and their former Vestey's employers, the old land rights activists and their Welfare Branch antagonists though, the history I sought to research was contested. Asking for the confidence and support of all these people while attempting to reconcile their conflicting accounts in a public piece of historical writing, the potential for controversy and conflict seemed great. With my meddling in their past, bitter enmities could be revived, libel could be alleged and lawsuits launched. If anything I said upset them, then my interviewees' cultural or spiritual indisposition could have far-reaching consequences. Falling out with those holding the keys to Wave Hill's history might be the least of my problems. Thankfully, my concerns were overblown, but one hundred interviews later, I see that being vigilant fuelled the respect, neutrality and courteousness I used throughout. Far from it being a chore, I encountered many fascinating characters, both famous and fame-less, and even made some very close friends. Thankfully the 'trainwreck' interviews were few, and when they came, the complaints arose from unexpected quarters.

The biggest blue I got into was with one of my first interviewees. If I'd known it at the time, Jill's* great enthusiasm to be interviewed could have alerted me to the trouble ahead, as could her propensity to ring me late at night and regale me with meandering, self-aggrandising tales of her life and times. We got along fine, until Jill read the text I'd written after our interview, describing some of her adventures on Wave Hill Station. Then she demanded to know what the hell I was doing, and why I was doing it. Through several heated phone calls and emails (which I later found out were being forwarded to other ex-Vestey company employees), Jill let me know in no uncertain terms that I had erred badly: the person she saw in my draft was not the one she identified with. I recognised then that something of a hagiographic portrait was expected. I backtracked, though drew the line when she demanded I retract her simple statements of fact. It wasn't long before Jill and I ceased contact, and I was forced to concede that the odd stoush is part of the business, whether I liked it or not. Jill taught me a salutary lesson: courtesy and playing by the rules won't always cut it. I had to stand up for my own standards as well.

As my university ethics officer had ham-fistedly tried to let me know, consideration of remote Indigenous people's cultural norms was paramount. I'd worked in remote communities enough to know that my interviews with single Gurindji women might be especially hazardous. Even though the women I wished to interview were a decade or so older than me, I would need to take care that we conversed in an easily observed public place, so that my motives for speaking to females could not be questioned. Derision, controversy and salacious rumours might otherwise ensue. In extreme cases, retribution from the women's relatives might be provoked. With all this in mind, I was perplexed when 'Carol'* , a Christian grandmother of staid habits, insisted that we went to an isolated section of Wattie Creek to talk. As an oral history interview, what followed was a farce. Instead of regaling me with a single memory, Carol quietly let it be known that she had been widowed five years earlier, and perhaps I might be interested...? My University Ethics Guide to Indigenous research had not prepared me for this eventuality.



Figure 5. Wattie Creek, 1970. Photograph: Rob Wesley Smith

While I enjoyed soaking up the yarns of everybody I met, in a few cases I had to reconsider my oath of authorial generosity. When all the documentary sources and my other interviewees were united in their opinion that an individual had been corrupt or hopelessly inept, how could I be truthful to history without offending and angering the person involved? In these situations, which were mercifully few, my preference for harmonious relations took a backseat and I painted them in a light I felt was fair, but not necessarily flattering. As a result, I expected a couple of fiery encounters with angry customers when my book came out. I happened to relay these fears to another interviewee, who'd by then read the book. 'I don't think 'Bob'* is going to like the way he comes over at all,' I said. 'What do you mean?' exclaimed my reader, 'You've given him a good go, he'll be delighted!' I should have known. As I'd done my job, the readers would judge for themselves.

When I'd done ninety interviews and thought I had the bases covered, I let my defences down. The bloke concerned was Alex Romanoff, a young Canadian geologist who spent six months at Wattie Creek during 1971–1972. We connected well in the interview, conducted in his home, and had a great email discussion

afterwards. In addition to his memories Alex possessed a wealth of photos and sound recordings which he generously copied and gave to me, and became, although it was not said, a supporter of my book. As Alex's role with the Gurindji was quite peripheral to the greater story of the walk-off and its aftermath, I did not make much of his interview in *A Handful of Sand*, and neglected to send him a draft for vetting.

It was then that global politics forced me to widen my narrow focus. With Alex's Russian surname, I initially assumed that the USSR was his country of origin, though I remembered that in our chat after the interview he had talked about the Ukraine and his relatives' troubles there. With little knowledge of the Ukraine and its tortuous history with Russia, I described him as a 'travelling Canadian-Ukrainian' – and the book went to print. He ordered four copies, and when they arrived he objected to this description and decided it needed correcting. Over then, to Alex, from whom I have permission to quote:

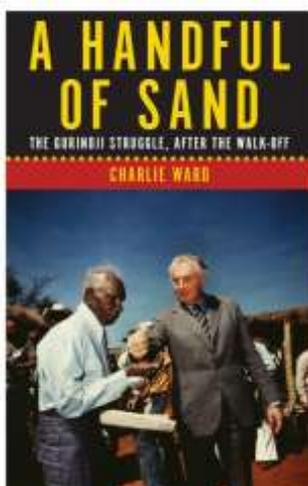


Figure 6. Alex Romanoff and Gurindji girls at Wattie Creek, 1970. Back row, L-R: Daphne Peter Nangari, Janice Rodney Jiparl Nangala, Josefa Kijngayarri Nangari-Nampin and Valerie Tasman. Front row, L-R: Connie Kuncon Nangala (from Yarralin) and Lorna 'Nampula' Nangala. Image courtesy of Alex Romanoff

Romanoff is my father's name. Now a naturalised Australian, in 1971 I was a Canadian citizen on an extended working holiday in this country. Of Russian-Ukrainian parentage, I was born in the US Occupation Zone of Germany, lived as a child in Belgium and grew up in Canada. My eclectic life experiences left me with an international perspective which extends far beyond the English-speaking world. Soon after I met Charlie, my mother's ancestral homeland, the Ukraine, exploded in revolution and civil war. I naturally have strong opinions about the situation there, particularly as the Ukraine has become the focus of vicious geopolitical power games.

In an exchange of emails Alex set the record straight on my assertion about his identity and also provided me with a far more nuanced account of his time at Wattie Creek than the one I provided in my book. As complex as conducting oral history is, mere expertise on one's subject matter is not enough. Substantiating *A Handful of Sand* with oral accounts had bought me an obvious lesson. A living social history brings a brief period of people's lives to the page, but the sum total of their identity and experience goes with them everywhere.

** Aside from Alex Romanoff's details, in this second article all interviewee names, professions, gender and places of residence in the article have been changed.*



Charlie Ward is a Doctoral candidate at the Humanities, Communication and Arts School of Western Sydney University. A writer and historian, Charlie is currently completing his PhD on the Aboriginal self-determination policy of the 1970s–80s. He also works as a Heritage Curator at the Northern Territory Library. Previously employed as a researcher with the Stolen Generations' Link-Up program in Alice Springs and as an oral history interviewer with the National Library of Australia, his long-term work with the Gurindji people of Kalkaringi and Daguragu NT resulted recently in the publication of his book, *A Handful of Sand: the Gurindji Struggle After the Walk-off* (Monash University Publishing, 2016). For further information and to purchase the book, go to: <http://tiny.cc/handful-of-sand>



UP COUNTRY

The History of Goshen, Terryvale, Goulds Country, Priory, The Marshes, Pyengana, West Pyengana, Bullock Drivers and the Sawmills of the Municipality of Portland, North East Tasmania

A new book by member Garry Richardson, with special pre-publication offer.

Tania Rattray, MLC for Apsley, has written: ‘In the same meticulous manner as with Garry’s previous collection of works, this fascinating history focussing on Goshen, Goulds Country, and the Pyengana area allows the reader to gain an understanding and reach an appreciation of the way of life for the community and the history of its people and to be engaged with those stories throughout the book. Tales that recount personal tragedies along with the many triumphs are testament to the resilience of those who lived, worked and raised their families in what would be seen by today’s standards as pretty tough times.’

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AUSTRALIAN LIVES LAUNCHED AT NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

Marsali Mackinnon

‘This book should come with a warning—it might make you cry! Or it might provoke laughter,’ Associate Professor Frank Bongiorno told the audience at the May 31 Canberra launch of *Australian Lives: An Intimate History*. The book of the Australian Generations national oral history project was launched at the National Library of Australia (NLA) on 31 May, as one of a series of events in Eastern seaboard capitals.

Australian Lives ‘tells us what it was like to be alive and human in the Australia of the 20th and early 21st centuries,’ said Australian National University School of History Associate Professor Bongiorno. The hard copy book has an e-version which enriches the reading experience with an audio package of interview excerpts. ‘It uses digital technology in new and immediate ways by including an important audio component—readers can listen to interviews at the click of a button,’ Assoc Prof Bongiorno said.

The authors, Monash University Professor of History Alistair Thomson and Anisa Puri, professional historian and Australian Generations Project Officer, said the book contained fifty life history interviews selected from the 300 featured in Australian Generations. Interviewees came from across Australia, ‘from Brisbane to Perth to Scottsdale in Tasmania’, said Professor Thomson. He thanked them for sharing their lives with the Australian Generations oral history interviewers, which had been ‘a bold thing to do.’

The Canberra launch also featured a conversation between one of the Australian Generations interviewees featured in the book, Rhonda King, her interviewer oral historian Mary Hutchinson, and Professor Thomson. Oral History Victoria was the first to launch *Australian Lives* on 22 May in Melbourne, with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

The Australian Generations Oral History Project, the first of its kind in Australia, was a collaboration between historians at Victoria's Monash and La Trobe universities, the National Library of Australia and ABC Radio National. The project, which won an Australian Research Council grant, contains 1221 hours of audio recordings archived at the NLA, where they are available for research and public use subject to interviewees' conditions.

A team of National Advisors based in each state and territory supported Australian Generations, including Queensland's National Advisor Marsali Mackinnon.

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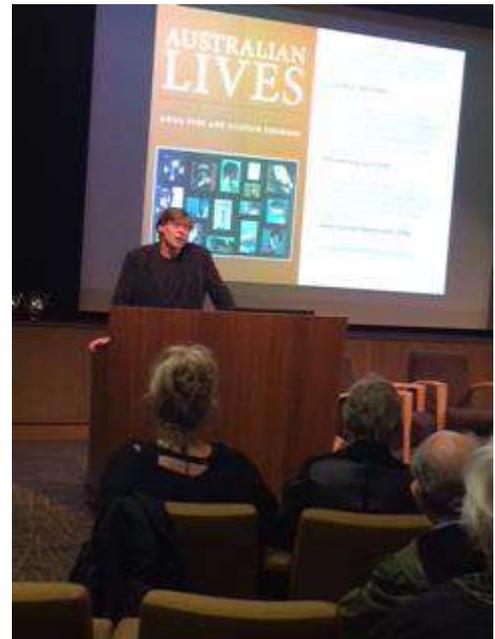


Figure 7 Professor Alistair Thomson

Melinda Reed from the Sorell History Society writes: Your members may be interested to know that Volume 2 of *Pitt Water Chronicles* which I edit for Sorell History Society was launched last week and is now available for purchase. Many of the articles begin as oral histories that we honour by documenting and publishing. We love the way it allows us to bring personal histories and memories to community attention and pay respect to local experiences.

<http://sorellhistory.org/pitt-water-chronicles/>

Do you have a project to tell us about?

We are always looking for items for the newsletter, anything from a few sentences to a lengthy article. All members are interested in knowing what is going on in the state, and you may make some good contacts through responses to the article.

WEBSITES

Oral History Tasmania: www.oralhistorytas.org.au

Oral History Australia: www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au

IOHA (International Oral History Association): www.ioha.fgv.br

EQUIPMENT HIRE

A **Fostex digital recorder** is available for hire to members. It comes with its own lapel microphones and *User Guidelines*.

Cost of hire: \$30 a week, plus transport costs if necessary. You will also be required to sign a form agreeing to pay to replace any part that is damaged or lost while you have the recorder, up to a maximum of \$250 for individuals or \$500 for groups or institutions.

To make a booking, contact Jill Cassidy on 0418 178 098 or email president@oralhistorytas.org.au

THE OBJECTIVES OF ORAL HISTORY TASMANIA

- promote the practice and methods of oral history
- educate in the use of oral history methods
- encourage discussion of all problems in oral history
- foster the preservation of oral history records
- pursue common objectives and maintain links with other Australian oral history associations through membership of Oral History Australia Inc.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Individuals	\$40.00	Households	\$55.00
Student/unemployed/pensioner	\$30.00	Institution	\$65.00

ORAL HISTORY TASMANIA EXECUTIVE

President, and delegate to Oral History Australia:

Jill Cassidy 0418 178 098 Email: president@oralhistorytas.org.au

Secretary: Alison Johnston

Treasurer: Lana Wall

Committee members: Terry Fritsche, Andrew Parsons, Leonie Prevost, Pauline Schindler, Jen Thompson

All correspondence should be directed to Jill Cassidy, Oral History Tasmania, Queen Victoria Museum, PO Box 403, Launceston Tas 7250, or emailed to president@oralhistorytas.org.au

Real to Reel is edited by Jill Cassidy. The next edition is due in December 2017 and contributions should reach the editor no later than 30 November. They can be emailed to president@oralhistorytas.org.au