

Real to Reel

Newsletter of Oral History Tasmania Inc.



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NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE – Jill Cassidy

2021 Biennial National Conference 14–17 October

Preparations for Oral History Australia’s *Oral History in Troubling Times: Challenges and Opportunities* are well under way, although it will be several months before we can decide if the conference can be held face-to-face, or if it will need to be held virtually. We are hoping that even if it’s the latter, at the very least Tasmanians can still meet in person in Launceston, so please spread the word far and wide. With luck we may also be joined by people from other states and perhaps from ‘bubble’ destinations such as New Zealand.

Final dates have now been chosen. Covid willing, on Thursday 14 October there will be workshops on various topics, followed by a Welcome cocktail party at the Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery. On Friday and Saturday 15–16 there will be presentations of varying lengths, with a conference dinner on Saturday night. Sunday 17 will be set aside for tours.

Keynote speaker Mark Cave is from the USA. His paper is entitled, ‘Why Did This Happen? *Making Meaningful Answers in the Aftermath of Crisis*’ and the abstract reads:

‘In most modern democracies journalists have traditionally been charged with offering the explanations for why bad things happen. The acceptance by the community of these explanations is an essential part of the process of recovery. But often the explanations manufactured by the media have more to do with what communities want to hear than they do about the truth and frequently fail to acknowledge systemic social problems that exacerbate the negative impacts of crisis. Based on work done in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in 2010 and Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020, this paper explores the limitations of the media in the aftermath of crisis and argues that oral history has an important role to play alongside journalism in creating explanations that not only help communities move beyond crisis but help them move beyond crisis in ways that make them stronger.’

The deadline for the proposal of presentations is March 1 and it would be wonderful to have a number of Tasmanians speaking. Please consider submitting a proposal; information on how to make a submission is on page 6.

Oral History workshop

A reminder that the 2021 Covid-safe workshop will be held at the Glenorchy library on 29 May. You will have received an email recently with further information.

Seminar and Annual General Meeting

We were delighted that the seminar and AGM were able to go ahead at the Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery in September. Covid restrictions meant we could not provide lunch, so limiting the speakers to two, but we nevertheless had a pleasing attendance and the talks were well received.

We asked attenders to complete a survey to see if in the future they would prefer two speakers rather than three. The numbers were evenly split, within both the members and the general public. This year the conference will replace the annual seminar so a final decision for 2022 will not be made until close to Christmas.

At the Annual General Meeting there were no extra nominations so all members of the committee were re-elected to their positions. The president's annual report is below, followed by the treasurer's on p.4.

In their own words

The National Portrait Gallery and the National Library of Australia have collaborated to produce an app entitled *In their own words*. The app works as an audio guide to the National Portrait Gallery's displays but anyone around the world can download the app for free to hear extraordinary Australians (a great many of whom have died) in their own words. You can be intrigued and inspired by their two-minute personal stories.

The app is based on the work of Hazel de Berg (1913–1984), a woman of immense talent who, from 1957 onwards, created the National Library of Australia's first oral history collection. Over 27 years, she recorded the voices of 1290 Australians born between 1865 and 1953, including artists, writers, composers, scientists and many others. Since December 2020 her legacy reaches a whole new audience as part of the innovative collaboration between the National Portrait Gallery and the National Library of Australia. Extracts from her recordings bring to life a wide range of portraits, matching visual and audio elements to create an immersive and moving experience.

Of course, Oral History Australia's award for excellence in oral history is named after Hazel de Berg. You can find out more about her at:

<https://www.nla.gov.au/stories/blog/behind-the-scenes/2020/12/11/hazel-de-bergs-oral-history-interviews>

You can also hear some of Hazel de Berg's extended interviews at:

<https://www.nla.gov.au/stories/news/2020/12/10/hazel-de-berg>

Hazel interviewed very widely but artists were particularly well-represented – she recorded around 250 painters and sculptors. But she also interviewed individuals as diverse as [Don Banks](#) (composer), [J. H. Carver](#) (physicist), [Harry Seidler](#) (architect), [Robert Helpmann](#) (dancer), [Jack Lang](#) (politician), [Jessie Street](#) (feminist), [Peter Weir](#) (film director) and [Bruce Williams](#) (economist) to name just a few.

Other interviewees on the website include Arthur Boyd, Russell Drysdale, Norman Lindsay, Colleen McCullough, Margaret Olley and Thea Procter.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2019–2020

Jill Cassidy

It gives me great pleasure to present the President's Report for 2019–2020, although as might be expected the year falls into two very different parts.

In September 2019 we held another interesting seminar. Garry Richardson returned to the Oral History Tasmania seminar program, this time to share aspects of his own life in 'Half a lifetime: thirty-nine and a half years in forestry'. Barb Lypka and Chris Goodacre spoke about the Friends of the Theatre Royal's project documenting the inside story of the theatre's significant performers and theatre makers in the period 1960s–1980s in 'An oral history of the Theatre Royal'. Finally, Elizabeth Nickols' talk about 'The people you meet each day' focused particularly on her interviews with Dutch migrants of Penguin and Ulverstone. This talk attracted a number of people connected to the local Dutch community, and it was pleasing to see that we had an improved attendance compared with the previous year. The move from August to September may also have contributed.

The biennial National Oral History conference was held in October in Brisbane. Our two scholarship holders, Yvette Barry and Elisha Goss, proved worthy recipients who contributed during the conference and then wrote detailed accounts for the benefit of all members; these were published in the December issue of *Real to Reel*. I must thank the committee who again paid part of the costs for my attendance. Apart from the opportunity to discuss the latest developments in oral history, the conferences provide the only time for the committee of Oral History Australia to meet in person and determine future directions.

In early 2020 we were beginning the process of planning the usual May workshop and September seminar when all plans were thrown into disarray with the Covid-19 lockdown. The committee continued to meet via the new (to us) technology of Zoom and this has been quite satisfactory, but the workshop had to be postponed. We considered holding both the workshop and seminar online, recognising that these would not have worked as well, but in June government restrictions eased and we were able to plan an August workshop and continue with the September seminar. In both cases we needed to leave the provision of food and drinks up to each participant, in order to comply with Covid restrictions. We therefore reduced the cost to attenders of both events.

Finding a venue for the workshop in Launceston has been difficult since the Queen Victoria Museum decided some years ago to close at 4.00. Several possibilities were explored but even where rooms were still available during Covid times, the cost was often prohibitive. So it was very pleasing that Lana Wall found the Green Centre at Peacehaven would be available in August.

Covid-19 has had one worthwhile outcome. Oral History Victoria holds regular face-to-face meetings where members can have a casual discussion of oral history issues over a coffee or wine. However, this has not been possible in Tasmania with our far-flung membership. Now that we have been introduced to Zoom it was possible to schedule Tasmania's first 'fireside chat' in June. Attenders were from all regions and the event proved a winner. A second event is planned for later in the year.

We made an overdue change to the website layout this year, by including an Acknowledgment of Country as a footer on each page.

The main activity this year has been planning for the biennial National conference, scheduled to be held at the Tramsheds in Launceston in October 2021. Business Events Tasmania supplied a variety of Launceston postcards for inclusion in delegates' satchels for last year's Brisbane conference, and I gave a short speech at the close of proceedings inviting people to come.

However, Covid then put a face-to-face conference in jeopardy. In consultation with Oral History Australia the decision has been made to continue planning as if it will go ahead, with a final judgment to be made in the first half of next year. If meeting in person proves impossible, the conference will proceed online. Oral History Australia has provided \$2000 seeding money.

The committee continues to run smoothly, with Alison Johnston still taking the minutes and Lana Wall keeping track of the finances. Long-time member Terry Fritsche did not seek re-election last year, and I'd like to thank her for her contribution which included taking the minutes for a number of years. We were delighted to welcome Cindy Thomas to our deliberations and I thank her, along with continuing members Jon Addison, Karin Lê, Jai Paterson and Leonie Prevost. 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	2020	2019
<i>For the year ended 30 June 2020</i>	\$	\$
	<i>Notes</i>	
Receipts		
Donations	110	-
Equipment hire and sales	-	140
Grant - Oral History Aust 2021 conference	2,000	-
Interest received	23	24
Membership	1,110	1,405
Sale of handbooks	156	32
Seminar/AGM	570	365
Term deposit interest	161	201
Workshop	40	370
Total Receipts	4,170	2,537
Payments		
Audit fee	100	100
Conference 2021 - deposit	1,464	-
Executive expenses	68	135
Filing fees	63	63
Insurance - equipment	589	586
National conference	3,000	-
OHAA capitation fees	465	495
Seminar/AGM costs	442	396
Stale cheques written back	(7)	-
Website	110	300
Workshop	55	354
Total Payments	6,349	2,429
Net (deficit)/surplus for the year	(2,179)	108
Accumulated funds at the beginning of the financial year	12,536	12,428
Accumulated funds at the end of the financial year	10,357	12,536
Represented by:		
Commonwealth Bank - cheque account	4,271	6,611
Mystate Financial - term deposit	6,086	5,925
	10,357	12,536

I have examined the financial records and supporting documents of Oral History Tasmania Inc for the year ended 30 June 2020.

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: 15 AUGUST 2020

Name: Phillip James Brown

Signed:



A TIME TO CELEBRATE

Pip Nielsen

Member Pip Nielsen wrote this piece last year for the International Day for Older Persons held on October 1; it was published in the Mercury.

I don't know about this story revealing an epiphany, but it goes somewhere close. About 30-or-so years ago I boarded a plane in Melbourne, en route to Cairns, to holiday and to catch up with a former school friend. No thanks to my tardiness, an affliction I have since overcome, I was lucky to get a seat. Single at the time and in my early 20s, I was hoping for a seat next to a gorgeous young man who would find me equally as attractive (it would make the long flight worthwhile). Oh, the frivolity of youth (and over ingestion of American TV). But I was young once. Full of high spirits for what may come, I made my way to my economy class seat, which happened to be the middle in a row of three.

I glanced at my two travelling companions and was grateful I had a Plan B - a good book. The young man in the window seat had his head in a nerdy science magazine, and airline-variety headphones jammed in his ears (yes, we had them in the '90s). An elderly gentleman was in the aisle seat. I don't know how old he was in years, but he was balding and had a hearing aid the size of a walnut. As I squeezed my way past his sizeable legs, he smiled and said, 'Hello, Love.' I returned his greeting but did not want to converse, beyond pleasantries, with this old man. Not at all. The young man did not acknowledge me. Boy, had I lucked out on the seat allocation.

The short story is that this flight turned out to be one of the most enjoyable, rewarding and meaningful three hours of my life. The older gentleman was keen to converse, and I acquiesced. He regaled me with a snippet of his life story. I had the privilege and honour to sit next to a World War Two veteran, a prisoner of war, a father, a grandfather, a man who had nursed his dying wife. There was so much more, but space won't permit the rest of his story here. His was an adventurous life that included incredible daring, immense tragedy, and equal doses of great and rotten luck. An erudite man, he was also a gifted storyteller. How he survived to be 'old' (and sitting right next to me sharing his story!), I shall never comprehend. This wasn't exactly my Plan A; it was better.

I didn't know it at the time, but conversations like this would lead me to one of the best jobs I have had in a long line of occupations. I am privileged to meet with and get to know truly, deeply, (occasionally madly), older people. When people ask me what it is, exactly, that I do, I tell them, simply, that I interview old people. The quizzical looks tell me that I need to provide further explanation. I add, 'I sit down with old people and record their life stories.' I do a little more than that, but that's the gist of it.

My work has taught and continues to teach, understanding. Regardless of background, heritage, circumstance, luck or eminence, every interviewee has told an incredible life story. Some are now affluent; some are pensioners. Others were affluent once. But one's level of financial independence is not a measure of how well someone has lived their life. My interviewees remind me of that all the time.

The common thread is that each one is, and has been, resilient. Our elders have weathered the big storms of life and overcome all odds; they have made it where others did not or have yet to arrive: to old age. They have encountered tragedy, death, illness, viruses (many a coronavirus), depressions, recessions, and world wars. Some have accepted handouts; most have not. They have blazed many a trail. They have loved, and they have lost. They deserve much respect, far more than a society that acclaims youth affords.

I remind myself of this when the 'old bloke' in the car ahead lingers a little too long at the lights after they have turned green. I bite my tongue when said gentleman travels at 60 km/h in a 100 km/h zone, and (sometimes) in the right-hand lane. He has, after all, run his race. I will be in the slow-lane one day, too, with the grace of God, and fair winds.

There is much to celebrate on October 1.

ORAL HISTORY IN TROUBLING TIMES

Challenges and Opportunities

CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS

With drought, bushfire, and floods, and now the pandemic, these have been desperately troubling times for all of us. They are also troubling times for oral historians wondering if and how to continue our work. Oral History Australia plans to meet in solidarity and optimism for our biennial conference in Tasmania in 2021 – but if that proves to be impossible, we will run our conference online.

Our conference theme invites you to reflect on the challenges and issues of undertaking oral history in troubling times, and to consider how oral history can illuminate the lived experience of troubling times both in the past and in our contemporary world. Through oral history recordings, we hear the intimate stories of everyday lives, and we create histories that challenge orthodoxy and speak truth to power. Oral history drills beneath the big histories of state, society and politics. It illuminates ordinary people's extraordinary lives and the ways in which people deal with the troubles of their lives and of our world.

Oral History Tasmania and Oral History Australia, in partnership with the College of Arts, Law and Education at the University of Tasmania and the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, welcome proposals for our 2021 biennial conference in the island jewel of Tasmania. Oral historians, in a variety of guises and combining age-old listening skills with dazzling new technologies, record intimate stories and create challenging histories. Our conference welcomes participants who use oral history in their work across the many fields and disciplines that contribute to community, professional and academic histories. We welcome presenters from Tasmania and across Australia, and from across the Tasman and around the world. We invite proposals for individual presentations, workshops, performances, and thematic panels. Plenary panels will focus on Oral History in Troubling Times and on Oral History in Tasmania.

Conference sub-themes may include, but are not limited to:

- Recording Oral Histories during the Pandemic
- Doing Oral History in Troubling Times
- New Approaches to Recording Lives
- New Technologies for Documenting and Archiving Oral Histories
- Interpreting Memories
- Making Histories in Old and New Media
- Performing Oral History
- Using Oral History in Creative Writing
- Ethical Issues in Oral History
- Training the Oral Historians of the Future
- Indigenous Oral Histories and Oral Traditions
- Migrants, Refugees and Ethnic Community Histories
- Gender, Women's History, Men's History
- Family History and Memory
- Histories of Sex and Sexuality
- Leisure and Pleasure
- Histories of Protest and Activism
- Memory Work for Human Rights
- Contested Memories and Histories
- Working Lives and Social Class
- Sensory Memory and History
- Place, Community, Memory
- War Stories and War Histories
- Memory, Violence and Catastrophe

Requirements

We welcome proposals for presentations in a variety of formats and media, including standard paper presentations (typically 20 minutes); short ‘lightning’ accounts of work in progress (typically 5 minutes); participatory workshops; performances; thematic panels comprising several presenters; and poster presentations. Presentations should involve oral history. Contact the Chair of the Conference Program Committee (Alistair.Thomson@monash.edu) if you would like to discuss the format or focus of your presentation before you submit it.

Proposals for presentations / papers / panels / posters should be no more than 200 words (single space, 12 point font in Times New Roman) and must include at the top of the page, your name, institutional affiliation (if applicable), postal address, phone number and email address, the title for your presentation/panel, the sub-theme/s your work best connects to, and the presentation format (standard 20 minute paper; 5 minute ‘lightning’ account of work in progress; thematic panel; performance; participatory workshop; or poster presentation).

Presenters will be encouraged to submit papers to the refereed, online Oral History Australia Journal, *Studies in Oral History*, whose editors aim to produce a themed issue about ‘Oral History in Troubling Times’ in 2022.

Submission

Proposals should be uploaded to EasyChair via this link:

<https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=oha2021>

To use this online system, you will need to create an author account (a simple process) and then submit your proposal by uploading it as a PDF document (with full details as listed above). Please follow the instructions provided on the OHA website if you are unfamiliar with EasyChair.

If you are unable to use this system, please email your proposal as a PDF attachment to Dr Annmarie Reid:

ohatassie2021@gmail.com

Further information

For conference information or to join the conference mailing list, email Jill Cassidy (president@oralhistorytas.org.au) or go to the conference website via the existing [OHA website](#) at:

<http://www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au/>.

* * *

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. See contact details at the bottom of the page.

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: \$20 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: Jon Addison, Karin Lê, Jai Paterson, Leonie Prevost, Cindy Thomas.

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

Real to Reel is edited by Jill Cassidy. The next edition is due in April 2021. Contributions are welcome and should reach the editor no later than 31 March. They can be emailed to president@oralhistorytas.org.au