

## Heritage Week — April 13 — April 20

# Family trees are flourishing

There was a time when tracing your family history was something most Australians preferred not to do. You never could tell what kind of shady ancestor you might turn up, to add any skeletons in the cupboard you already knew about.

And then, in the 1960s, attitudes began to change. Perhaps by then there was a comfortable length of time between us and the contacts. Nick Vine Hall of the Australian Society of Genealogists believes that it was the beginning of the planning for the Cook Bicentenary in 1970 that sparked it all off. Certainly he found that time membership of the Society began to increase noticeably. People wanted to know about their backgrounds — and those who found a convict among their ancestors took a certain pride, whereas, a generation before, their parents might have decided to keep quiet about it.

Until that time, the Society, which was founded in 1932 remained a comparatively small organisation. But the growing interest of Australians in the history of their country and their families soon showed up in an increase in the Society's membership — helped along the way by radio programmes such as City Extra in which Phillip Geeves had regular sessions simply answering the kinds of questions ordinary people asked.

And this is what the Society of Genealogists does — every year thousands of people want to trace their origins, and the library and staff of the Society are geared precisely to cope with that. The Society's first full time director, Nick Vine Hall, was appointed in 1978, and it has been since then that the Society has seen its dramatic increase in membership. It now has more than ten thousand members.

David Weston, librarian of the Society of Australian Genealogists takes up the story:

The Society of Australian Genealogists is a non-lending resource centre and reference library specialising in materials relating to the study of genealogy and family history, in the wider context of Australian history.

Membership of the Society has grown from 100 in 1932 to 10,000 individual and institutional members in Australia and overseas. It is now the largest society of its kind.

The Society collects by both donation and purchase, published works, original manuscript and photographic material useful in the study of family history. The Society's Library Collection of printed volumes, records on microform, and the Primary Records Collection,



form the most comprehensive repository of genealogical reference material in Australia, outside official Government collections. For more than fifty years the Society has preserved many records which would have otherwise been lost. Our collections are widely used as a major reference source for

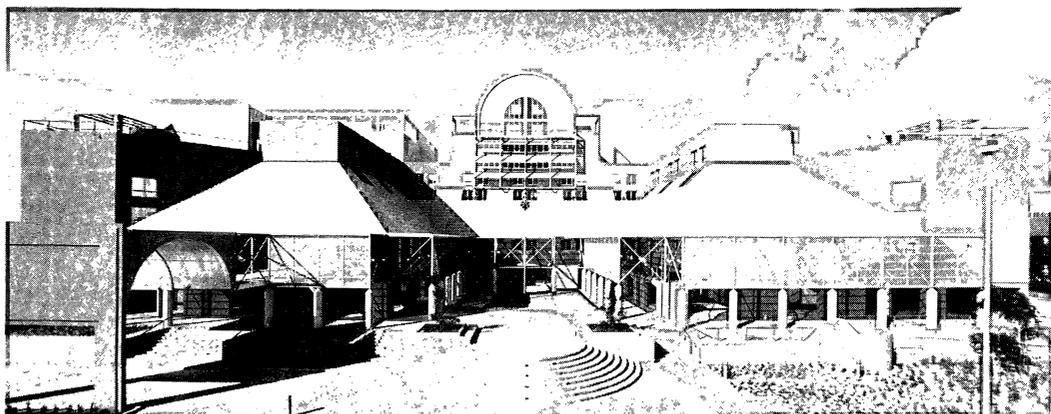
genealogical, biographical and sociological research purposes.

In December 1977, the Society moved to its present headquarters at Richmond Villa on Observatory Hill, Sydney. In his Annual

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## It's at the Beaufort



**The Beaufort Hotel and Darwin Performing Arts Centre is the major venue for the Darwin LAA Conference. The Beaufort Hotel has just opened and the Performing Arts Centre awaits its official opening.**

Architecturally unique among Australian hotels, the Beaufort was designed by Kerry Hill in post-modern style. The luxuries, the

refinements and all the personal finishing touches demanded by a five-star hotel are there but with an individual quality that reflects the special character of the Northern Territory.

The Beaufort offers luxurious comfort, with 235 rooms and a great range of restaurants and bars. There's Edo, a superlative Japanese restaurant; Sigg's, an intimate haven for superb food and service; Cafe Esplanade, cas-

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## FAMILY TREES

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port of activities for the year 1978, the president at that time, Mr Keith Johnson wrote:

The Society's achievements in the first year at Richmond Villa have been a milestone for family history research in Australia. The recognition of genealogy as an educational and cultural activity is now widespread in the community. Throughout the entire Commonwealth there is a growing awareness and appreciation of the contribution that our ancestors have made to the development of the nation and the Australian experience. The Society has an important role to play in the coming years.

The last decade has proved that the Society can fulfil this role and meet the increasing demand on its resources. In 1985, patronage of the Society totalled 15,233, an increase of more than 7% on the previous year.

In order to cope efficiently with demand of its members, since 1979 the Society has appointed full-time professional staff to ensure the highest quality of reader service facilities. The appointment of a full-time qualified Archivist in 1981, and Librarian three years later, have benefited the continuity of collections and their accessibility to library users.

The volunteers who have always been the very life blood of the Society continue to provide their services and it is only with their help that it is possible to maintain the level of assistance to our users.

Their knowledge in various aspects of genealogy and related disciplines is essential to the Society's aim of encouraging the study of genealogy and family history in Australia.

The Library of the Society of Australian Genealogists contains more than 15,000 volumes, classified and divided according to their Australian or overseas content. The strength of the Overseas Collection lies in the many fine reference books relating to Great Britain, in particular to England and Scotland, with an increasing number of volumes on the United States and various European countries.

The Society endeavours to acquire all published Australian family histories, local histories and genealogical reference books. Out-of-print items are also purchased from Australia and overseas.

The collection includes journals and periodicals from historical, genealogical and similar societies in Australia and abroad. Many are complete sets to date, bound to form a more durable and permanent resource.

Members of the Society have continually worked to expand the General Index to primary and secondary genealogical records. This consists of 600,000 entries to reference material relating largely to people who have lived in Australia and, in particular, in New South Wales. From 1984, information which formerly would have been added to this, has been compiled on Data Entry Sheets by members of the Index Group, for transfer into a computer data base as part of the Australian Genealogical Computer Index project. AGCI continues to expand with over 40,000 names now recorded. New operators are learning to record unindexed cemetery transcriptions and newspaper cuttings in AGCI. Other family history groups in Australia and individuals have purchased the AGCI programme and are contributing to the project. Members and other

family historians will soon be able to have access to AGCI data in microfiche format.

The Primary Records or Manuscripts Collection contains many genealogies, research notes, diaries, business records, family papers, newspaper clippings and similar documents. There are more than 25,000 indexed files, together with many thousands of photographs and a number of original portrait paintings and maps.

In 1984, the Society moved its large and growing collection of records on Microform to the newly acquired Annexe of Richmond Villa. These give members access to Australian and overseas publications and indexes not otherwise available. Recent acquisitions include the NSW Archives Genealogical Kit (Stage 1), which includes records of the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1787-1856, and recorded Convict Indentures. Other accessions have been the 1984 edition of the International Genealogical Index, microfiche of the Old Parish Register indexes of the seven most northern counties of Scotland, and Indexes to some 7 million early Civil Registration records of births, deaths and marriages in every Colony of Australia.

With the Mitchell Library and the National Library of Australia, the Society has for many years, been filming original church records from throughout NSW as part of the Australian Joint Copy Project, aided for the past several years by a grant from the New South Wales Government.

The Society's quarterly journal *Descent* places emphasis on 'how-to-do-it' articles and news items, while continuing to publish family histories and articles never before in print. The 'Enquiries' section of *Descent* attracts a great deal of reader interest and contribution from members.

For many years the Society has exchanged journals with other genealogical and related societies in Australia, and many societies in the British Isles, America and Europe. The society currently exchanges journals with more than 130 societies throughout the world.

In 1974, the Society established a Diploma Course in Family Historical Studies (Dip. FHS), believed to be the only qualification in the world which accredits its holders as qualified genealogists. Candidates are required to submit two theses on relevant subjects and to sit for a three-hour examination. So far 36 people have gained a Diploma and there's no shortage of new applicants.

The Society continues to collect transcripts of monumental inscriptions in cemeteries, whether from country areas, churches or lone graves on properties throughout Australia or overseas. To increase this valuable collection we are entirely dependent on the work of our members and their families collection.

A major project is the Rookwood Bicentennial Project, now in its fourth year. Two thirds of the gravestone inscriptions there, (approximately 400,000 graves) have now been transcribed with all the old sections being completed.

The Society of Australian Genealogists is essentially a non-lending reference library. Membership of the Society is by annual subscription, the cost being \$25.00 per single or institutional membership, or \$35.00 for joint membership. The Society is open for research on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday between 11.00 am and 4.00 pm. Richmond Villa is located at 120 Kent Street, Observatory Hill, The Rocks, Sydney.

David A Weston  
Librarian

Where can you unearth the Coffin Collection?  
Dig up the answer in the Australian Librarian's Manual, volume 3. Out now.

# The Search Is Over

Pergamon INFOLINE is pleased to announce another round of training courses for their online information retrieval service. There will be two courses, an Introductory Course for new users, and a course for Experienced users who need to review current developments on the system.

#### ADELAIDE

Introductory — Thursday, 20 March;  
Experienced — Friday, 21 March

#### PERTH

Introductory — Monday 24 March  
Experienced — Tuesday 25 March.

#### HOBART

Introductory — Monday 7 April  
Experienced — Tuesday 8 April.

#### MELBOURNE

Introductory — Thursday 10 April  
Experienced — Friday 11 April.

#### WELLINGTON

Introductory — Monday 5 May  
Experienced — Tuesday 6 May

#### AUCKLAND

Introductory — Thursday 8 May  
Experienced — Friday 9 May

#### CANBERRA

Introductory — Monday 26 May  
Experienced — Tuesday 27 May.

#### SYDNEY

Introductory — Thursday 29 May  
Experienced — Friday 30 May.

#### DARWIN

System Seminar — Saturday 5 July.

Courses will run from 9.30am to 4.30pm with a break for lunch. Morning and afternoon tea will be provided. Attendance will cost \$150 per day or \$200 if both courses are attended. Course venues will be announced once bookings have been received. For more information and bookings please contact:

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