



RGSQ Bulletin

May 2017

Vol 52 no 4

ISSN 1832-8830

Published by The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Inc., a not-for-profit organisation established in 1885 that promotes the study of geography and encourages a greater understanding and enjoyment of the world around us.

Patron: [H.E. Paul de Jersey AC, Governor of Queensland](#)
President: [Professor James Shulmeister](#)

From the President

Dear members, this is a special President's column this month. In the upcoming weeks, you will receive a letter from RGSQ announcing a special information session to take place before the lecture on Tuesday, the 6th of June at 6:30 pm.

The Society has operated successfully for 137 years using Letters Patent as the basis for its operation. Over the last few years the Council has been trying to bring the operation of the society on to a more modern footing and in doing so it has become apparent to the Council that the structure on which the Society is operating is potentially problematic.

There are a variety of issues with Letters Patent but the salient one in my mind is that over the years, the activities of the Society have become large and complex and Letters Patent simply does not provide the Society with the legal security it needs to operate safely. A major component of this appears to lie around liability. At the moment, it appears the only individuals in the Society who have liability covered under law are the President and Secretary. This is a potential risk for us, although we are fully covered by insurance for most foreseeable circumstances. We are also aware that Letters Patent was never designed with complex operations like the Australian Geography Competition in mind.

During the information session, we will discuss three potential legal structures with the members present. These are: (i) to remain operating under Letters Patent, (ii) incorporation under the Associations Incorporations Act (AIA), or (iii) move to a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) but under the auspices of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). The AIA and CLG, are both designed for not-for-profit organisations, with the CLG affording a more appropriate structure and governance for a society the complexity of RGSQ. Obviously, we as a Council would not take this issue to the members unless we thought a change was necessary. This will be a full and open consultation with the intention of bringing changes to the September AGM for implementation.

There is a deep and abiding affection on the Council for the traditions of the Society. The Council (and we hope the members) have no desire to break our affiliation with the crown. [This includes the President who is Irish (and proudly Australian) and by nature and inclination a dyed-in-the-wool Republican and NO these positions are not inconsistent!]. We are committed to retaining the Governor of Queensland as our Patron and the word "Royal" in the Society's name. We will also take care to retain the Society's charitable status.

These are important decisions for the membership to take and we urge all members who can attend the meeting to do so. We also encourage you to read all the supporting documentation that will be provided in the upcoming weeks.

* * *

By the time you read this newsletter, the special ANZAC lecture by Martin Crotty will have taken place and we will be lining up for the annual Thomson Address: This year's address is on "Revisiting the multifunctional transition in Australia's Wet Tropics: the climate change crisis" by Dr Steve Turton. Steve was until very recently a Professor at James Cook University and has wide-ranging experience in issues relating to the wet tropics in Australia. Steve is a dynamic and entertaining speaker and based on my knowledge of his speaking, it should be an excellent event. We also have a trip to Spicers Gap which promises to be exciting. Let's hope for a dry-ish rest of April to help this happen.

On other news, I am very happy to report that the numbers of students participating in the Australian Geography Competition rose by about 4000 over last year and even more excitingly there was a steep increase in the number of schools participating. Much of this success in getting numbers up can be traced back to the excellent work by Lilia following up with schools and geography teachers. It places the competition in an excellent space to push on to bigger and better things. Thanks to Bernard, the question writing team and all the member volunteers who have been involved in the massive organisation involved in getting the competition to the pointy bit. Students will be sitting the competition during the period of April 26 – May 9.

Jamie Shulmeister, President

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We have much pleasure in welcoming **Mrs Patricia and Mr Ian Brown, Mr Lachlan Short, Ms Joan and Mr Barry Daniel** as new members. We hope your association with your new Society is long and mutually enjoyable.



Images from RGSQ's 'Canberra - 10 Days in the Nation's Capital' trek, March 2017, images courtesy of Margaret Keates.

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Photography: B. Abnett, M. Crotty, B. Fitzpatrick, M. Keates, N. McManimm, M. West

LECTURE OF THE MONTH ANNUAL THOMSON ADDRESS

“Revisiting the multifunctional transition in Australia's Wet Tropics: the climate change crisis”

presented by Dr Steve Turton

Tue May 2, 7:30 pm, “Gregory House”
237 Milton Rd, Milton



Image: Mount Sorrow, Daintree National Park taken along Camelot Close, Cape Tribulation, Queensland, courtesy of Bernard Fitzpatrick.

The Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area has been recognized globally as the second most irreplaceable natural world heritage area and the sixth most irreplaceable protected area. Despite its high level of protection and international prominence as a successfully managed ‘multi-tenured’ world heritage property, the Wet Tropics faces an uncertain future. I shall describe the multi-functional transition of this tropical forest landscape from European contact in the 1850s through to the present day, followed by a discussion of threats to its ongoing status as a world heritage area, including - among others: insecure funding for research and management from state and federal governments, politicized views on how to manage the protected area, invasive species and the predicted significant effects of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services. There are also numerous activities occurring within adjacent land use areas that are directly and indirectly affecting the world heritage property. These threats include urbanization due to steady regional population growth, demands for infrastructure development (roads and water impoundment), tourism development and agricultural expansion - giving rise to its status as a highly-contested landscape. I shall conclude by presenting a range of climate adaptation pathways and opportunities for

sustainable use of this globally recognized tropical forest landscape.

Biography

Professor Steve Turton is now retired and works as a casual environmental consultant. He is also an Adjunct Professor in Environmental Geography at Central Queensland University in Cairns. Steve has recently been appointed as a Director of Terrain (Wet Tropics) Natural Resource Management Limited. From 2005-2016, he acted in several senior roles as both Director and Professor at James Cook University in Cairns. From 2003-2005, he was an Associate Professor in Geography and Director of Research for the Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre. Steve is a former Councillor of the Institute of Australian Geographers (2004-2007 and 2011-2012) and a former member of the Wet Tropics Management Authority’s Scientific Advisory Committee (2004-2011). In 2010, he was a member of the Engineering & Environmental Sciences Panel for the Australian Government’s Excellence in Research Australia initiative.

During his career, Steve has authored and co-authored over 140 publications, including journal articles, book chapters and numerous scientific reports for Government and industry and publishes occasional articles in *The Conversation* on a range of geographical issues.

SYNOPSIS

History of the Formation of Lamington National Park

*April lecture presented by Neville
McManimm*

Written by Margaret Keates. RGSQ Council Member

Neville McManimm might be a “jack of all trades” but his immense passion for the History of Lamington National Park was evident during his April lecture. Throughout the entire presentation, you felt that you were there ...

On a clear day, away to the south of the long flat mountain of Tamborine, and further away behind it, lie the mountains of Lamington National Park. In 1964, Neville went to Binna Burra National Park for a holiday and, according to his father, he never really came back. This saw the start of a long career in the bush he loves. Lamington National Park is accessible from Nerang and Canungra and the history of how it came to be is just as winding.

The struggle to get a National Park in Queensland was long and tiring and one that would not have come to fruition without the persistence of Robert Collins. The Collins are known as the founders of NAPCO (North Australian Pastoral Company). Born to Irish migrant parents, Robert Collins lived at Mundoolun Homestead near a small township now known as Canungra. He stayed there till his marriage in 1879 and moved to Tamrookum (between Beaudesert and Rathdowney) afterwards.

In the late 1800’s, Collins served as one of RGSQ Presidents. Through his presentations and his connection to the society, he introduced others to his passion for the outdoors. On one of his presentations in 1896, he read “The South-Eastern Highlands

of Queensland”, which described a two-day walk up Christmas Creek to the State Border in 1895, to the Queensland branch. 1898 saw Collins and others guiding the then Queensland Governor, Lord Lamington, up the mountain ridge above Christmas Creek to the top of a high waterfall, now known as Lamington Falls. In 1905, Collins convinced the Government to set an area aside for “a sanatorium”; he pictured a place where people could get away from the pressures of the city and to him this meant the mountains. He arranged for a local, John Buchanan, to clear an eight feet wide, 7 mile or 12 kilometre long track, at Government’s expense, from Christmas Creek and Running Creek to Point Lookout. This was extended to 32 kilometres in 1908.



Memorial plaque on a bench at Binna Burra, honouring Robert Collins’s efforts and vision to create the National Parks System in Queensland, courtesy of Neville McManimm.

Over the years Collins, who was also a member of the Queensland Parliament, had been acting to gain National Parks or Reserves status and in 1906 the Queensland Parliament passed “An Act to Preserve State Forest and National Parks”. Even though Witches Fall on Tamborine Mountain and not the McPherson Range was declared the first official National Park on the 28th of March 1908, it was a start.

Although Robert Martin Collins died in August 1913 without seeing his dreams being completed, a young man, named Romeo Lahey, took up his cause. Lahey, who met Collins a few years before, came from a timber milling family, with the township of Canungra having grown around the Lahey sawmill. Romeo was passionate about the mountains; this was obvious from his letters to the Government and the photos he took. These found their way to a newspaper and a story about his cause, “Wanderer”, was published in 1911. Romeo’s letters to the Tamborine and Beaudesert Shires were inspired by a politician who challenged Romeo by saying “If the people want it, it will happen, so show me.” And he did! He toured the areas tirelessly, gave talks, spoke about the photos he took and, importantly, got people to sign a petition. This was the beginning of the Lamington National Park campaign.

Although Romeo joined the Army and was commissioned to fight in France, he kept in touch with his sister, Vida, until she moved to England to be closer to her brothers and cousins.

Lands Minister Hunter was also fighting to protect the national Parks and he too, sought advice from Lahey.

During 1916 - 1919, surveyors White and Belson, surveyed over 47,000 acres of the new park. Their maps and reports are on display at RGSQ and are a good resource for those keen to find the hidden gems in the area.

Although the national park was there, it was not easily accessible. Once the O’Riellys settled on the mountain, the guesthouses opened. To explore the eastern side of the mountains, visitors would access the area by riding up their Stockyard Creek track. George Rankin was given approval to cut a horse track from Beechmont to Mt Hobwee.

Full time workers were employed by the Forestry Department to make walking tracks designed by Romeo Lahey. His designs allowed steady inclines for the walkers as opposed to following the ups and downs of ridgelines. Lahey also devised the system of grading the tracks from 1-10.

In 1938, the official 18-kilometre walking track connecting O’Reilly’s and Binna Burra was to be opened by the Minister, following a 9-kilometre walk in and a cutting of the ribbon. Alas, the Minister did not attend and sent the Department’s Director in his place.

Although the park suffered some damage during WW2 with the troops from Canungra Army camp traversing the area, throughout the history, it has been because of the vision and immense effort of people like Romeo Lahey and Robert Collins that the National Parks survived to the enjoyment of millions of visitors.

SYNOPSIS

ANZAC and the Nation

Special ANZAC Day lecture presented by Associate Professor Martin Crotty

Written by Rob Simson. RGSQ Member

Memorial Plaque, Australian National War Memorial, Villers Bretonneux, courtesy of Martin Crotty

If you were unable to attend, you missed a most scholarly presentation about the economic impacts on our society, and the social disruption and trauma that resulted from Australia’s involvement in World War I, including the evolution of the ANZAC legend.



Professor Crotty began by pointing out that WWI was an unnecessary and avoidable war amongst European powers, with their political leaders blindly unaware of the likely consequences of their absurd decisions. He pointed out that the Gallipoli campaign was a minor side-show in the four years of pointless human slaughter, that killed or maimed so many. Australia’s involvement led to 40% of eligible men signing up as volunteers or conscriptees, with 60,000 killed in action and many more injured and/or traumatised because of service in Turkey, Belgium and France. Despite the wonderful efforts of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 11,000 Australian soldiers from the WWI remain unaccounted for to this day in unmarked graves.

Around all this sacrifice has grown the ANZAC myth, but this mythologising, Professor Crotty claims, has led to the down-

playing or covering up of the terrible personal tragedies and trauma that resulted from the war.

The suffering visited on those families at home has remained with us; the men returning carrying infectious diseases that spread in the Australian population; and the post-traumatic shock that was to linger unrecognised and untreated into the great depression years and beyond. Many of the returning men faced unemployment and horrendous difficulties in re-adjusting to a normal social life. They carried their war wounds throughout their remaining lives, some with horrendous facial injuries – the result of exposure to gunfire and explosives as their heads and shoulders were exposed above the protection of the trenches.

So, he says, the importance of WWI in the history and the making of the nation, should not be seen just in the terms of the overriding 'Birth of the Nation' legend, but in acknowledging and understanding so much more that was spawned by Australia's engagement in that terrible conflict.

Examples are:

- The emergence of the Australian Parliament as the dominating law making institution, usurping many of the powers of the States that had Federated in 1901;
- The Federal system of taxation, severely reducing, if not crippling, the financial powers of the States;
- The National Welfare and War Service Pension system that has benefited many returned men, their families and war-widows;
- The prominence, significance and near-religious status of the RSL;
- The local, state and federal funding of not just memorial shrines and cemeteries, but of community buildings and infra-structure projects that have served Australian communities throughout city and country;
- The strengthening of the egalitarian nature of the Australian society and hence the adoption of the ideal of mateship as something uniquely Australian in our approach to life.

And on the unfortunate, if not despicable, side he referenced:

- The elevation of the prestige of men, the warriors, over the role of women in our society;
- The divisions and bitterness over the conscription issue that lingered on after the war and came back to haunt us in the Vietnam War years;
- The locking-up and later deportation of decent Australian citizens of German descent;
- The commercialisation of ANZAC Day and the promotion and sale of products by association with the legend;
- The continued failure to recognise the immorality of our own frontier wars and the suppression of and near abolition of Aboriginal culture over most of the continent.

Professor Crotty was rather scathing of the Prime-Ministership and the overall competence of our war time leader, Billy Hughes, and I saw that as a rather unfair coming from an academic of high repute about a man of humble beginnings who rose up through the labour ranks and tried to do his best while clinging on, admittedly, to the veneration of the glorious British Empire.

Nevertheless, the depth and wide-ranging nature of the issues covered in the talk and the enlightened answers Martin Crotty gave to the questions from the audience made the occasion most memorable, and RGSQ may find it difficult to find another speaker to deliver such a stimulating ANZAC address in future years.

* * *

UPCOMING EVENTS



MAY: TREK TO SPICER'S GAP ROAD CONSERVATION PARK

When: Wednesday, May 10

Cost: \$15

Note: This trek is now fully booked. Any participants who can't make it please phone the RGSQ Office on 3368 2066.

Meet in Aratula for morning tea (included in cost) after 10am and then pool cars to drive up to Governor's Chair car park, visiting historical sites on the way. Bring your own lunch to have at Governor's Chair Lookout (short steep slope to lookout). After lunch, take a walk along the Heritage Trail with historical plaques, 3.2kms return of gently sloping track. There is an alternative track back for experienced bushwalkers via Mt Mathieson (extra 4.5kms). Wonderful bird watching and wild life opportunities and geographical input from Bernard Fitzpatrick. If wet, will be postponed to May 17th.

We will contact you by email or phone prior to the trip to confirm arrangements and meeting place.

Coordinator: Chris Spriggs

* * *

JUNE: FOLLOW THE MURRAY

An illustrated talk following the Murray from Goolwa to Albury

When: Thu 15 June, 9.15am for 9.30am start

Cost: \$10.00

Book and PAY: contact RGSQ at 07 3368 2066 or email at admin@rgsq.org.au by June 6

Note: The cost includes tempting morning tea.

Venue: RGSQ Auditorium, "Gregory House", 237 Milton Rd, Milton.

Travel by coach, boat, car ferry and much leg as we travel from the mouth of the Murray (near Goolwa) to Albury. At times, we were not sure whether we were in New South Wales or Victoria. The catchment of the Murray and tributaries covers 14% of Australia's mainland. The Condamine (which becomes the Darling) rises near Killarney, the Murrumbidgee near Khancoban and the Murray in the foothills of the Snowy. We actually visited the junction of the Darling and the Murray - a major difference in their widths!

So much variety in the scenery, the vegetation (magnificent eucalypts), land form and land use from cultivation to grazing to pine clad hills, the spectacular coloured cliffs, very old and very new hotels and housing, 'millions' of houseboats particularly near Echuca and 'tinnies', locks, lakes and dams, the Snowy Hydro scheme (not on the Murray) and so much more.

Quite an adventure and 'millions' of photos! But I won't show them all! Look forward to seeing you and bring your friends!

Coordinator: Audrey Johnston

JULY: FIELDTRIP ON BRISBANE RIVER

4-hour CityCat trip on the river as part of the Institute of Australian Geographers' Conference

When: Thursday, July 13, 9am-1pm

Cost: \$50

To book, please contact RGSQ on 07 3368 2066 or email at admin@rgsq.org.au.

The Brisbane River, a large dynamic waterway, is the pivotal physical element shaping the City of Brisbane and is, arguably, the City's greatest natural resource.

From its source in the Brisbane valley the river courses through the CBD before reaching its estuary in Moreton Bay. A great way to observe the City's changing development is on the river. The field trip will be a 4-hour journey aboard a CityCat ferry from the University of Queensland downstream through the CBD, Southbank Parklands to Hamilton warf, and returning to the University.

Dr. Iraphne Childs, a geographer from UQ's SEES and RGSQ member and Vice-President, will be joined by an officer of the Brisbane City Council's urban planning team to give commentaries on the river's geography, including notable flood events, historical and present-day waterfront land use. **Coordinator: Iraphne Childs**

JULY: ROCKS AND COALS OF THE IPSWICH BASIN

When: Tue July 25

Cost: \$55 members, \$58 non-members and includes morning tea and lunch.

The bus will depart at 07:30 am from the bus stop in Park Rd at the Eagle Junction Railway Station; return drop off is expected before 17:00. There is plenty of all day street parking in the area.

RSVP: Fri July 14, to book and pay please contact the RGSQ office on 07 3368 2066.

For further information about the trip, please contact GrahamRees@wombatshollow.com.

Much of the geography of SE Queensland is written in the 400 M year geology of the region. Warwick Willmott and David Trezise of the Geological Society of Australia will guide us through the formation of the Ipswich area in late Triassic period of around 200 M years ago. Members will recall that Warwick has delivered a number of fascinating lectures at RGSQ and has edited a number of publications of the Geological Society, including "Rocks and Landscapes of Brisbane and Ipswich", which will be available for purchase on the day for \$20.

Coordinator: Graham Rees

AUGUST: DAY TRIP GOLD COAST WATERWAYS SUSTAIN AND ENHANCE

Have you ever wondered how the sand moves along the Eastern coastline and the problems caused for safe waterways and beaches? Join us as we:

- Evaluate the solution of the Sand By Pass system with training walls at the Nerang and Tweed Rivers
- Understand the creation of Wave Break Island
- See the location of the Artificial Reef at Narrownneck

When: Thursday 3 August

Cost: \$40 members \$45 nonmembers includes Morning Tea

Lunch: Beachfront at Burleigh Heads Surf Club Cafe This is **not** included in cost. There is a choice of sandwiches, fish and chips/salad, hamburgers etc. with drink allow \$12 or BYO.

Depart 7.30 Park Road Opp Eagle Junction Railway Station Redcliffe Coaches, 8.00 Park and Ride Mains Road Nathan behind QE2.

Return Approx 4.30pm at Park and Ride 5.00pm Eagle Junction

To **Book** contact RGSQ office on 07 3368 2066, please indicate

pick up location.

RSVP 20 July

In memory of Brian McGrath 23.2.37 to 4.8.16

Brian McGrath was working for State Gov't's Co-ordinator Generals Dept in 1965-1967 when the Gold Coast beaches became very badly eroded. He contacted the Delft Hydraulic Laboratory in Holland who sent out Mr Rudi Diephuis. Brian and Rudi walked the coast from the Broadwater to Tweed Heads, camping/motels at night. A 3-year investigation program was set up with coloured sand, depths from 25m boat and wave riders on coast to measure wave height and where the sand travelled. The sand moved in and out between the sand dunes and offshore bar and northwards from New South Wales, 500,000 cubic metres per year with longshore drift. The sand disappears north of Fraser Island into a black hole.

In 1969 Brian and Heather flew to Holland and worked with Delft Hyd. for 16 months to produce the Delft Report which was presented to Old State Gov't in 1976. The Nerang, and later Tweed River, bypass was approved. Training walls were built to stabilize the River mouths and create safer waterways. The Beach Protection Authority was created to stabilize sand dunes with vegetation GCC Council has now taken over the beach replenishment. Special thanks to Heather McGrath for this background information. **Coordinator: Jeanette Lamont**

AUGUST

RGSQ 4WD TREK TO FRASER ISLAND

guided by Mike West, 5 nights/6 days

Wed 23 to Mon 28 August 2017



To be waitlisted, please contact RGSQ on 07 3368 2066 or email at admin@rgsq.org.au

SEE FRASER ISLAND WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS HELPED CONSERVE IT FOR YOU!

RSVP: Friday, May 12

Please note: this trek is currently fully booked, however if you're interested, please contact the RGSQ at 07 3368 2066 to be waitlisted.

During 4 days of 4WD trekking, Mike West, the man who got Fraser Island heritage listed, will personally guide you around K'Gari's, the indigenous name for Fraser Island, best kept secrets, including the Valley of the Giants, which he named during the logging blockades in the 1980.

You will see Fraser's unique Patterned Fens that astound international scientists and marvel at Fraser's famous spring wildflowers display along the way while looking at the tallest known Tallowwood.

- *If you own a 4WD and are willing to take a couple of fellow RGSQ members with you on the trip, please let us know.*
- RGSQ will make Dilli Village it's home while on Fraser. The package will include the services of a chef who will take care of all the meals while we're on the island, including the packaged lunches, for a fee of \$60/day, so we can fully enjoy the island's wonders.
- *We're working out all the detail currently, please wait with booking accommodation until advised by RGSQ. Thank you!*

To find out more about Dilli Village and Fraser Island visit:

<http://www.usc.edu.au/learn/the-usc-experience/usc-spaces/fraser-island-research-and-learning-centre/about-fraser-island#history>

Coordinator: Wayne Mackenzie

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

KEN SUTTON MEMORIAL LIBRARY GROUP

When: Monday, May 22, 2017

Time: 9:00 am

Where: "Gregory House", 237 Milton Rd.



MAP GROUP



Map Group member, Ian Francis, delivering his presentation on "Interpreting Nautical Charts", an ancient and different kind of mapping to land based mapping.

❖ **May, 2017 - Event: MSIA/Map Group Evening**

- **Friday, 12 May - 7pm to 9.30pm at Gregory House Auditorium**

- An Information Sheet detailing the Evening Program has been circulated to Map Group members via an email, and registrations are coming in. A similar email is being sent to MSIA members to register for the evening.

❖ **June, 2017 - Gathering & Presentation**

- **Monday 5 June - 10am, Gregory House Auditorium:**
 - **Presentation:** Speakers/Topic: Noel Dawson and Des Boyland - "The WARLUS Mapping Program"
 - **Gathering:** Will follow presentation.

❖ **June, 2017 - Event: OSM 2 Day Workshop**

- **Wednesday 21 & Thursday 22 June - 10am to 4pm, each day in Gregory House Auditorium**
 - **NOTE:** The dates have been brought forward a week, due to the OSM teacher's scheduling commitments;
 - A more detailed Information Sheet on the 2-day Workshop Program will be emailed to Map Group members. Registrations are already coming in and only a couple of spaces remain available for this digital mapping workshop.

MAP LIBRARY DONATIONS

These continue to occur and the types of donations vary from one to a few maps. Recent donations have included:

- A mapping brochure on "Mapping the Great South Land". Donated by Mary Comer from her private collection.

- British War Office Silk Maps from the 1950s covering South East Asia. Donated by Patricia Burton from her family collection.
- A Maritime Safety Queensland Commemorative Nautical Chart of Moreton Bay - Northern Portion, produced in 2009, but based on a 1960 Chart. Donated by the Queensland Maritime Museum, Brisbane, via Peter Nunan, a Map Group member and member of the Maritime Museum.

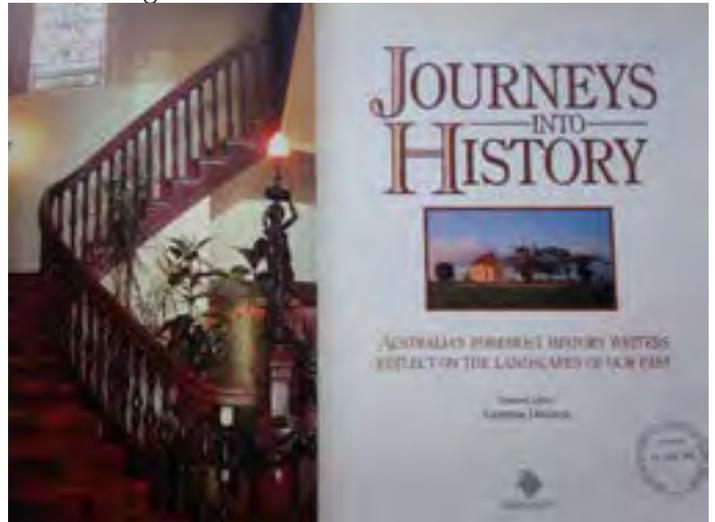
These donations are adding to the diversity of RGSQ's Map Library collection, which distinguishes it from other, far larger Map Collections held in government archives and libraries - these days their coverages are being narrowed to a spatial area, or core mapping records.

Bob Abnett, Co-ordinator, Map Group

book of the month

JOURNEYS into HISTORY

Graeme Davidson (Ed.); Weldon Russell Publishing, 1990



"*Journeys into History*" is an invitation to take a track winding back in time as well as forward into the Australian landscape. It is not a guidebook in the conventional sense.

The journeys depicted are representative of the geographical and historical diversity of Australia. They range from cattle stations in the outback to the ruins of the penal stations of Norfolk Island and Tasmania. There are segments exploring the goldfields of the Kalgoorlie area and the landscapes of the Sugar Coast of southeast Queensland and northern New South Wales. I quote from the introduction:

"Chronologically, the studies range from the first makers of the Australian landscape, the Aborigines, through the landscapes moulded by convicts and gaolers, squatters and selectors, bushrangers and miners, vigneron and tourists, suburbanites and planners, down to the most modern of our landscapes, that of the national capital, Canberra."

The glossy paper A4-sized book is beautifully illustrated with pictures of landscapes and buildings related to the text. It sits well on the coffee table as well as the library shelves. There are multiple authors, novelist, journalists, historians and geographers. "It is written with the conviction that, in travelling the land ourselves, we come more immediately into the company of those past travellers who, in making the land their own, helped also make it ours." Rob Simson, RGSQ member

Feature Story

Centenary of Thomas Griffith Taylor's Thomson Medal

By Dr Peter Griggs, RGSQ member.

July this year marks the centenary of the then Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (Queensland Branch) awarding Thomas Griffith Taylor (1880-1963) a gold Thomson medal.ⁱ

At the time, Griffith Taylor was the Physiographer attached to the then Commonwealth Weather Service (today known as Australian Bureau of Meteorology), and a part-time lecturer at the Commonwealth Flying School (1914-1918) and in physiography at the University of Melbourne (1917-1918).ⁱⁱ

Griffith Taylor's medal was the fourth Thomson medal awarded by the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (Queensland Branch), and the first Thomson medal not awarded for providing services to the society. Unusually and unexplainably - nothing is noted in the Society's minutes as to the Council's reasoning - the Council decided to hold a geographical essay competition. Griffith Taylor's essay titled "Geographical factors controlling settlement of Tropical Australasia" was judged to be the winner of the medal. The essay was subsequently published in the Queensland Geographical Journal.ⁱⁱⁱ

The medal-winning essay was based upon Griffith Taylor's six-month journey across tropical Australia to assess its suitability for European settlement.^{iv} Personal observations, conclusions based upon observations of climatic data and 'dubious' opinions characterised Griffith Taylor's essay. He noted that, except for parts of the Sahara, the Australian tropics were hotter than any other region globally. Northern Western Australia was singled out as being especially inhospitable. He concluded that tropical Australia was mostly pastoral land, but there was the potential to grow more rice around Darwin and Cairns, and more tea and coffee on the Atherton Tableland (a suggestion which has since eventuated).

Griffith Taylor's understanding of European settlement in the tropics of Queensland, however, was flawed.

He suggested that "the average white settler was not yet accustomed to the worst months of the North Queensland coast" and that the white farmer's wife struggled "to rear her babes handicapped by a tropical climate".^v Yet in the late 1910s, hundreds of European small farmers were growing sugar cane successfully in North Queensland and settlers had created several thriving towns and cities (e.g. Townsville; Charters Towers; Mackay, Cairns; Innisfail), thereby

demonstrating that Europeans could easily occupy the tropics. Australia's tropics were not a 'white man's graveyard', a common misconception of the time.^{vi}

A prediction about the future population of tropical Australia by Griffith Taylor, however, has proved to be remarkable accurate. In his essay, he estimated that the future population of Australia's tropics would be 1.4 million, and that probably a century or more would pass before this figure was reached. Figures from the 2011 census, recorded that the population of tropical Australia had still not reached 1.4 million.

In March 1823, Fennegan, Pamphlet, Parsons & Thompson set off from Sydney on a timber-getting expedition. Caught in a savage storm they were swept out to sea. Thompson was washed overboard and drowned. On 12 April, they landed on Moreton Island. Eventually they reached the mainland near Sandstone Point, just before the Bribie Bridge.

They called it Bribie/Sandstone Passage.

In 1920, Griffith Taylor was appointed Associate Professor and foundation head of Australia's first university geography at Sydney University.^{vii} His attempts through maps to show that Australia was fully occupied by the 1920s and that large sections of the interior were only suited to pastoralism were some of the earliest examples of resource mapping in this country.

Yet his pessimistic views that Australia's semi-arid and arid environment would restrict the country's total population to about 19 or 20 million infuriated supporters of the idea that Australia could support a population of between 100 and 500 million. Taylor's writings and maps were attacked across the country, with the Western Australian education authorities banning his elementary 1914 text on Australia because he used the terms 'arid' and 'desert'.

Eventually, Taylor left Australia in 1928, spending the remainder of his academic career in Canada, before retiring to Sydney in 1951.



A 1920s-map produced by Griffith Taylor showing the limits of sheep grazing and wheat cultivation in Australia. Source: National Library of Australia digitised item, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj:234331946/view>

In 1976, he was honoured on an Australian postage stamp bearing his portrait. His many textbooks on the geography of Australia are now classics, but a careful examination of the

maps in these books reveal that he was remarkably accurate in his predictions about the capabilities of this country. □

ⁱ Minutes of Council meeting, 16 July 1917, in Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (Queensland Branch), Minute Book, Volume 6 (1916-1925), pp. 28-29.

ⁱⁱ For biographical details see J.M. Powell, 'Taylor, Thomas Griffith (1880-1963)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/taylor-thomas-griffith> [Accessed 3 April 2017].

ⁱⁱⁱ Thomas Griffith Taylor, 'Geographical factors controlling the settlement of Tropical Australasia', *Queensland Geographical Journal (New Series)*, Vol. 32 (1916-1918), pp. 1-67.

^{iv} David Day, *The Weather Watchers. 100 Years of the Bureau of Meteorology*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007, pp. 121-122.

^v Griffith Taylor, 'Geographical factors controlling the settlement of Tropical Australasia', pp. 57 & 58.

^{vi} For additional details see P.P. Courtenay, *Northern Australia. Patterns and problems of tropical development in an advanced country*. Melbourne: Longman, 1982, pp. 20-25.

^{vii} J.M. Powell, 'Taylor, Thomas Griffith (1880-1963)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/taylor-thomas-griffith> [Accessed 3 April 2017].

RGSQ Bulletin

May 2017

Lecture of the Month: Tue May 2
Annual Thomson Address *"Revisiting the multifunctional transition in Australia's Wet Tropics: the climate change crisis" delivered by Dr Steve Turton.*

Tours and Activities: Wed 10 May *Trek to Spicer's Gap Road Conservation Park.*

Map Group: Mon 5 June, 10 am "Gregory House", 237 Milton Rd, Milton. Key Event: Noel Dawson and Des Boyland – "The WARLUS Mapping Program"

Ken Sutton Memorial Library: Mon May 22, 9:00 am, "Gregory House", 237 Milton Rd, Milton.

Council meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month.

The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Inc
"Gregory House", 237 Milton Road, Milton Q 4064

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