

Commemoration Planning: The Next Three Years

How Professional Historians in Queensland Can Maximize Work Opportunities

By Neville Buch, Ph.D., MPHA.

Historians are good at looking backwards, but not so good at looking forward. Quite by accident, last year, I found a revolutionary approach to boost my local history work. It was a realisation that the 30th anniversary was happening for the 1982 Commonwealth Games in about a month's time that led to our local history groups, on the Brisbane Southside, to organise a local community commemoration of this important event for the city, as well as the state and nation. The weird thing was nobody thought to do anything for the 30th anniversary, not even the Commonwealth Games organisation. Our small local history groups acted fast to capture the commemoration moment and created an event which drew attention to the work of local history through the local newspaper. There was also a great networking opportunity that was created through collaboration with the Living Memory Project, organised by Marion Stell from University of Queensland, and Celmara Pocock from the University of Southern Queensland.

It made me realise that if we put in place commemoration planning as professional historians we could produce more work opportunities. The key is planning sufficiently ahead of time for important commemorations that will appear on the horizon in the next three year. What I am seeking to share with my colleagues is the product of a small research project to see what commemorative events are coming up. The commemorations that will be held this year are probably somewhat late to organise a commissioned project; however, one must never assumed that the opportunity is completely lost, and it is worth a look. If one sees an opportunity for commemoration event next year, the advice is to act quickly. There is a little more time to consider the commemoration events of 2015. My intention is not only to repeat the exercise in the future for the following three years, but also to further develop the work I have done here for the period 2013-2015. To that end I am seeking the assistance of my colleagues to build and refine a database of commemoration event information. I have been guided primarily by *Chronicle of Australia* (Chronicle Australasia, 1993), and have made a small measure in verifying dates with online documents. The Chronicle I believe to be a reliable source. It had the work of (then) Professors Alan Frost, Stuart Macintyre, Brian Fletcher, Ann Curthoys, Geoffrey Bolton, and (then) Drs Verity Burgmann and Marilyn Lake. Even so, errors quite possible, and so I will update and correct information with your assistance.

In putting together these lists I have not included every conceivable commemoration, as I will explain as I proceed through the lists. The focus is on Queensland commemorations but we live in a federated nation, and I have considered Australian events outside the state that will be important to this audience. Some commemorations are more important than others, and with that in mind, I have prioritize anniversaries in the following way. Centenaries are probably the most significant, followed by golden (50) anniversaries. Considerations would be then given to the quarter-century, 150th and 75th celebrations. Diamond (60) anniversaries would follow. There remains the 30th, 40th, 125th and 175th anniversary, at which stage the order appears more arbitrary. If one disagrees with the order, it matters very little as all these commemorations will be ultimately noted. What has not been included are the 20th anniversary and decade (10) celebration. They only have been left out

due to a lack of resources at hand, but I would be pleased to add such commemorations if members felt it important to include upcoming remembrance of more recent events.

Australian and Queensland Commemorations for 2013

In 2013 the events of 1913 form centenaries, and the events of 1963 are the half-century anniversaries. For inside or outside Queensland there were no centenaries that I judged appropriate for this list, from what I had examined. There are a few important golden anniversaries, that of Australia-Japan Trade Agreement signed in Tokyo (August 5) and Sir John Eccles being awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine (October 17).

The events of 1988 are the quarter century anniversaries. Unfortunately the quarter-century since the Australian Bicentenary celebration (January 26) has come and gone without much observation. And while it is true that this would be an anniversary of an anniversary, the time of national celebration does have itself important significance. The same can be said of the national event of 1888, The Centenary of the First Fleet Arrival, which meant the 125th of the occasion this year. The importance of the national celebration is evident in that the bicentennial year was the occasion the Queen officially opens the new Australian Parliament House (May 9), and hence the building is a quarter-century old. It is also a quarter-century since the convictions against Lindy and Michael Chamberlain were quashed (September 15). It should be noted that next year is three decades since Lindy Chamberlain lost her High Court appeal against the same conviction and life sentence (February 22, 2014).

For 2013 the events of 1863 are the century and half anniversaries. I have generally ignored the anniversaries of Australian explorers, and there are few, but I note that the anniversary of the State Funeral for Burke and Wills (January 21) has just passed.

The events of 1938 are the three-quarter century anniversaries. For inside or outside Queensland there were no such anniversaries that I judged appropriate for this list, from what I had examined. If I missed something, please let me know.

The events of 1953 are the diamond anniversaries, and this year there are a few international events with Australian connections that need to be noted. There is the Queen Elizabeth II coronation (June 3) and the end of the Korean War when it ceased in a truce (July 27).

The events of 1838 are the century and three-quarter anniversaries, and the Myall Creek Massacre (NSW) is the most notable (June 10).

The events of 1973 are the fourth decade anniversaries, and October is the big month. Patrick White was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (October 19) and the Queen officially opened the Sydney Opera House (October 20).

The events of 1983 are the third decade anniversaries. In a week (February 16) we will have the anniversary of the Ash Wednesday Fires (Victoria and South Australia). Next month (March 06) is the anniversary of Bob Hawke's ALP landslide electoral victory. In the latter half of the year (September 27), we will have the anniversary of one of Bob Hawke's most memorable remarks, looking back to when Australia II won the America's Cup, breaking the 132 year hold of the New York Yacht Club; the symbolic moment in the Australana cultural revival during the 1980s.

For Queensland there are very important quarter-century events coming up very soon:

| Queensland 25th Anniversaries in 2013 | |
|---|---|
| Wednesday, May 01 | Opening of Expo 88 in Brisbane's South Bank |
| Sunday, December 01 | Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, former Premier of Queensland, appeared before the Fitzgerald Inquiry into police and government corruption |

There also important century and half celebrations for the Cape, and the racing and sugar industries:

| Queensland 150th Anniversaries in 2013 | |
|--|---|
| Monday, March 25 | Settlement established on Cape York Peninsula |
| Saturday, August 03 | Queensland Turf Club founded |
| Monday, September 30 | Captain Louis Hope manufactured sugar from cane grown on his Moreton Bay property |

The century and a quarter promise much for the history of Queensland mining, culture, and parliament:

| Queensland 125th Anniversaries in 2013 | |
|--|---|
| | Chillagoe was named by William Atherton |
| Sunday, February 17 | Cyclone severely damages Mackay |
| Tuesday, April 02 | Her Majesty's Opera House opened in Brisbane |
| Sunday, May 12 | Thomas Glassey becomes first labour representative in Queensland parliament |

The Whiskey A-Go-Go is almost a forgotten sage in Queensland history, and the Sunnybank District History Group is looking to a meteorological commemoration, which includes the remembrance of the 1973 Brisbane Tornado:

| Queensland 40th Anniversaries in 2013 | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Friday, March 08 | Whiskey A-Go-Go Club fire-bombed |
| Monday, November 04 | Tornado ripped through Brisbane |

Australian and Queensland Commemorations for 2014

In 2014 the events of 1914 form centenaries. Obviously, most of those centenaries will be to do with the remembrance of the Australian participation in World War I, such as when Prime Minister Joseph Cook committed Australia to war (August 5); when Australian Forces captured of German Rabaul (September 13); and the time (November 26) that Major-General William R. Birdwood was placed in command of Australian and New Zealand troops. The Australian Navy has a particular role to play at this time. There are the familiar events: Australian naval armada sails from Albany with the first Australian and New Zealand troops for the war (November 1), followed quickly by Australia's first major naval victory when HMAS *Sydney* defeats German cruiser *Emden* (November 9). Not so well-known is the loss of Australia's first submarine, AE1 (September 14), and following year will be the centenary of the loss of the second submarine AE2 (April 30, 2015). Not all centenaries next year

will be about World War I, and there will be an occasion to remember the First Double Dissolution declared (June 5) since Federation.

The events of 1964 are the half-century anniversaries. The theme of the Australian Navy continues next year among these anniversaries, and in fact, tragically I am referring to one of the biggest events in Australian naval history (February 10): the Melbourne–Voyager collision with the sinking of HMAS Voyager and the loss of 82 seamen. Donald Campbell did much better on both water and land in 1964, and in that year (July 17) he gained the land speed record (then 403.1 mph) at Lake Eyre; it establishes Campbell's two Bluebirds together as the holder of the world land and water records. Of course, tragedy on the water came for Campbell only a few years later (January 5, 1967). Popular culture is not forgotten with *The Beatles* arriving in Australia (June 11). There are also events around Australian politics and media when we think back to when *The Australian* newspaper is first published (July 15) and National Service is reintroduced (November 10).

The events of 1989 are the quarter century anniversaries. They are not always good memories. At the height of the Airlines Pilot Dispute (August 24), 1,640 pilots resigned en masse. Newcastle earthquake (December 29) was a shock when Australians thought of major natural disasters only in the terms of floods and fires.

The events of 1864 are the century and half anniversaries. While there were several such events for Queensland, there was nothing that could be found beyond the state. Again, I may have overlooked something important.

The events of 1939 are the three-quarter century anniversaries. This year is 30th anniversary of the Ash Wednesday Fires, next year will be the 75th anniversary of the Victorian Black Friday Fires (January 16). The year 2014 will not only be about World War I, there will also be important anniversaries around World War II, such as when Australia declared war (September 03), and like the Birdwood event for WWI, we see the WWII anniversary (September 19) of Major-General Sir Thomas Blamey placed in command of Australian Troops. Wartime Australia are dramatic moments when Australian Prime Ministers leave their post (sometimes in a coffin), and so it is interesting to note that Prime Minister Joseph Lyons died in office only months (April 7) before the outbreak of war. We will think of Curtin's death at the end of WWII more significantly in 2020.

The events of 1954 are the diamond anniversaries. We recently had the Queen's diamond jubilee, and the regal theme will continue when we look at Queen Elizabeth II's arrival in Australia (February 3); the first reigning monarch to visit Australia. I have not made significant endeavours to look at Australian sporting history, but the fact (June 21) that John Landy runs the mile in world record time (then 3 minutes, 58 seconds) at Turku, Finland, is a worthy Australian milestone. Australian political historians will have their hands full next year with anniversaries around the Petrov Affair (and those of the new Whitlam Government -- see further on). It all started when (April 20) Northern Territory Police, on Federal Government orders, thawed Russian officials attempt to remove Evdokia Petrov from the country, after her husband Vladimir Petrov, a Soviet diplomat, had defected; and subsequently (May 17) with the opening of the Royal Commission into the Petrov Affair.

The events of 1839 are the century and three-quarter anniversaries. Next year won't be just memorials for the politically powerful. There will be occasions to think of the historically

disenfranchised, such as when Governor Gibbs gave the order (October 10) that Aboriginal persons are to be given equal protection of English Law.

The events of 1889 are the century and quarter anniversaries, and the theme of the historically disenfranchised continues. Sometime in that year the Australian Women's Suffrage Society was formed. Ideas of liberty of another sort will be remembered (October 25) in Henry Parkes' Federation Speech at Tenterfield. Next year will be special occasions for the engineers, as we think of Hawkesbury Bridge being completed (May 2); the final railway link between Adelaide and Brisbane. It will be also a time to remember (November 15) that Lawrence Hargrave invented a rotary engine designed for manned flight.

The events of 1974 are the fourth decade anniversaries. It is the year that the Commonwealth Government takes bold steps. Tertiary education fees are abolished as Federal Government takes over states' financial responsibilities for the sector (January 1). Federal Cabinet accepts Woodward Report recommendations (July 1) that all Northern Territory reserves and missions should be handed over to the local Aboriginal people. There is an unprecedented combined sitting of both houses of Federal Parliament (August 6) to vote to enshrine the principle of 'one vote, one value' into the Australian electoral system. Ruth Dobson becomes (March 26) ambassador to Denmark; first women career diplomat to be appointed as an ambassador. These special anniversaries are not always big events. Advance Australia Fair is announced (April 8) as the new national anthem, and Saturday postal mail deliveries ceased (February 23). It was a big year, and at the end of it (December 25), Cyclone Tracy hits Darwin.

The events of 1984 are the third decade anniversaries. The High Court loss for Lindy Chamberlain has been mentioned (February 22). Surprisingly, not a Whitlam reform but that of the Hawke Government, we have 30 years since the Medicare scheme began (February 1). And it took ten years since the Whitlam Government announcement, but Advance Australia Fair was proclaimed (April 19) as the new national anthem. But the biggest political debate of the time took place around what appeared to be an insignificant event (March 17). Historian Geoffrey Blainey addressed a major Rotary conference in the Victorian city of Warrnambool; sparking the Blainey Affair and the debate on Asian migration & Australia multiculturalism.

In Queensland there are no centenaries but there are significant half-century milestones:

| Queensland 50th Anniversaries in 2014 | |
|--|---|
| Friday, December 05 | Vince Gair won a Senate seat for the DLP |
| Wednesday, December 10 | Queensland Government declares a state of emergence in an attempt to end an industrial dispute at Mount Isa Mines |

The quarter-century will bring a major Queensland set of commemorations in political history:

| Queensland 25th Anniversaries in 2014 | |
|--|--|
| Thursday, July 03 | Fitzgerald Inquiry Report handed down |
| Tuesday, December 02 | Queensland elects its first state Labor government in 32 years |

The year will see major commemorations in Brisbane colonial history:

| Queensland 150th Anniversaries in 2014 | |
|---|---|
| | The Moreton Bay Courier becomes the Brisbane Courier |
| Sunday, January 26 | The Victoria Theatre opened in Brisbane |
| Tuesday, February 25 | Work begins on the railway line from Ipswich to Toowoomba |
| Monday, December 01 | The Brisbane Queen Street Fire |

Uranium and nuclear power still plagues our minds, whatever side one takes:

| Queensland 60th Anniversaries in 2014 | |
|--|---|
| Tuesday, July 29 | First reports are received of large uranium deposits at Mary Kathleen |

Convict history will have its moments next year:

| Queensland 175th Anniversaries in 2014 | |
|---|--|
| Friday, June 27 | Death of Allan Cunningham, botanist and explorer |
| Tuesday, July 01 | Governor Gibbs gives the order that Moreton Bay is to be abandoned as a penal settlement |

Flooding is currently a topical issue, and no doubt it will be next year:

| Queensland 40th Anniversaries in 2014 | |
|--|--|
| Friday, January 31 | Flood waters in Brisbane begin to recede |

Australian and Queensland Commemorations for 2015

In 2015 the events of 1915 form centenaries. The Australian World War I anniversaries will reach its climax in the centenary of the Gallipoli campaign. In order of these events, we note the following. Australian and New Zealand troops (April 25) land on the Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey. Major-General Sir William Bridges, Field Commander of the First Australian Imperial Force, is killed (May 18) by a sniper at Gallipoli. Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick is killed (May 19) at Gallipoli. Albert Jacka becomes (July 29) the first Australian to be awarded the Victoria Cross. Looking generally at the war history, there are many commemorations of battles which I have not bothered to record in this document. One of the forgotten events among the Australian World War I anniversaries is a rare enemy attack on the home front, in the form of a Turkish nationalist terrorist action (January 1) at Broken Hill. Again, these commemorations are not all about war, and there were other worthy centenaries, such as when William Henry Bragg and William Lawrence Bragg (father & son) were awarded (December 10) the Nobel Prize in Physics.

The events of 1965 are the half-century anniversaries. And there were other Australian wars. Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies committed (April 29) Australian troops to the Vietnam War. The year 1965 has important milestones in changing social attitudes. There is 'The Moree Stop' (February 21) in the Australian Freedom Ride. The White Australia policy is deleted (August 2) from the ALP immigration platform. Roma Mitchell becomes (September 23) the first woman judge in Australia when she is appointed to the South Australian Supreme Court bench.

The events of 1990 are the quarter century anniversaries. And one anniversary describes well the era –when Federal Treasurer Paul Keating admits (November 29) that Australia is in recession.

The events of 1865 are the century and half anniversaries. Some wars have little to do with our history, but they nevertheless mark some importance to our national memory, as when the Confederate sloop-of-war, *SS Shenandoah*, entered (January 25) the Port of Melbourne.

The events of 1940 are the three-quarter century anniversaries, and there are strange twists and turns in the set of World War II commemorations. Sir John Latham, Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, and Chancellor of Melbourne University, is appointed (August 18) Australia's first diplomatic representative in Japan, and thoughts about the subsequent events in December 1941 will be in mind during 2016. A more insightful appointment at the time was Richard Casey's appointment (January 8) as first Envoy to Washington D.C. The theme of Australian naval victories continues in the World War II anniversaries, when HMAS *Sydney* sank (July 19) Italian cruiser *Bartolomeo Colleoni*. One of the great naval tragedies for Australia will be remembered in November 2016. And the naval traffic during WWII did go both ways, when we remember the British prison ship, *Dunera*, that arrived (September 6) in Sydney with 2,700 German, Austrian and Italian internees. One of the less-known home front events was when three senior federal cabinet ministers and a chief of the military general staff were killed (August 13), not in combat action, but in an 'ordinary' plane crash in Canberra.

The events of 1955 are the diamond anniversaries. The follow-on from the 2014 commemoration of the Petrov Affair is the anniversary of the ALP Split -- the Pro-Evatt state ALP executive expels (April 7) 104 party members, including 18 members of Victorian parliament and six members of the nation's House of Representatives. With less controversy at the time – but perhaps with more today – the first part of the Snowy Mountain Hydro-Electric Scheme becomes operational (April 30).

The events of 1840 are the century and three-quarter anniversaries. Paul Edmund de Strzelecki reaches (February 15) the highest peak on the Australian Alps and named the place in honour of Polish patriot, Tadeusz Kosciuszko.

The events of 1890 are the century and quarter anniversaries. In these lists there has not been much reference to literary history, but here Robert Louis Stevenson arrived (February 13) for an Australian visit from Samoa. Neither has there been much reference to traditional labour history, and 2015 will mark both the start of the eastern Australia Maritime Strike (August 16) and its end (November 6).

The events of 1975 are the fourth decade anniversaries. And we are back to anniversaries of the Whitlam Government reforms. It was Medibank that began (July 1) under Whitlam. Perhaps one of the greatest achievements of his Government was the founding (May 29) of the Australian Family Law Court. Of course, 1975 was the downfall of the Government. Dr Jim Cairns is dismissed (July 2) as Deputy Prime Minister; a high point in the Khemlani Affair and the Juni Morosi Scandal. Eventually it concludes when the Governor-General Sir John Kerr dismissed (November 11) the Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. As one government falls, another rises, and Papua New Guinea becomes (September 16) an independent nation. And another close-by neighbour loses its independence, making it a deeply Australian concern when five Australian journalist in Balibo, East Timor, are murdered (October 16). Human tragedy, however, is not always far away in other countries, and the year also sees the collapse (January 5) of the Tasman Bridge on the Derwent River.

The events of 1985 are the third decade anniversaries. It is a time to correct the mistakes of the past. The formerly-known Ayers Rock and the Uluru National Park are handed over (October 27) to the Mutijula Aboriginal community. The Royal Commission into British atomic testing at Maralinga hands down its report (December 5); condemns the British Government for breaching safety standards and recommends compensation payments.

In Queensland there were no centenaries or golden anniversaries but there are important commemorations in the building of Queensland for the century and half:

| Queensland 150th Anniversaries in 2015 | |
|---|---|
| Sunday, January 04 | Telegraph links Brisbane and Rockhampton |
| Tuesday, July 14 | The foundation stone of the Queensland Parliament building was laid by Governor George Ferguson Bowen |
| Friday, July 31 | Ipswich to Grandchester railway line opened |
| Friday, August 14 | First race held at Eagle Farm in Brisbane |
| Saturday, October 10 | Townsville named and gazetted as a port of entry |

It will be a time of symbolising the capital in the three-quarter century anniversary:

| Queensland 75th Anniversaries in 2015 | |
|--|--|
| Wednesday, July 08 | Story Bridge opened; has become, along with the City Hall, the most iconic image of Brisbane |

Queensland labour history may rise again for the century and a quarter anniversaries:

| Queensland 125th Anniversaries in 2015 | |
|---|--|
| Sunday, March 01 | William Lane first publishes the Worker |
| Monday, March 02 | The Steamer 'Quetta' is wrecked in the Torres Strait; Queensland's worst maritime disaster (loss of 134 lives) |
| Monday, August 31 | First Meeting of the Australian Labour Federation |

Convict history will continue to hold attention for another year:

| Queensland 175th Anniversaries in 2015 | |
|---|---|
| Sunday, May 31 | Ambush of Granville Stapylton party 21 miles from Mt Lindsay; alarm & recover organised from Cowper's Plains outstation. |
| Tuesday, August 04 | John Storry Baker (Booralsha) walks back into the Moreton Bay penal settlement after escaping fourteen years previously (8 January 1826) and living with an Aboriginal tribe on the Darling Downs |

There are many opportunities here to make work and seek commissions. I encourage members of the Association to seize the day...seize the commemoration.