Public and Popular Histories of Anzac

A Symposium for History Week 2015

Tuesday 8 September, 2015
State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, Sydney

Program

Follow on Twitter: #anzachistories
Opening plenary
9.00 - 9.15  Registration

9.15 - 9.30  Welcome – Professor Sean Brawley

9.30 -11.00 Chair – Tanya Evans

Carolyn Holbrook, Anzac from the Bottom Up

Anna Clark, Anzac and everyday historical consciousness

11:00 -11.30 MORNING TEA (provided)

Anzac fictions

11.30 – 1.00 Chair – Jarrod Hore

Daniel Reynaud, Anzac Cinema

Fay Anderson, Deadline Gallipoli

Kylie Flack, Baptism by fiction? Representations of Anzac in Australian junior historical fiction since 2000

1:00 - 2:00 LUNCH (not included in registration cost)

Selfies and Diaries

2.00 - 3:00 Chair – Jennifer McLaren

Tom Sear, Anzac Selfies & Avatars: Hyper-connective commemoration and Anzac Day 2015

Maggie Patton, See the world through their eyes’: Commemoration and community engagement through the European War Collecting Project

3:00 - 3:30 AFTERNOON TEA (provided)

Making Anzac histories

3:30 - 4.30 Facilitator: Michelle Arrow

A panel discussion with the makers of a range of recent screen histories of Anzac:
Christopher Lee, screenwriter, Gallipoli
Lisa Scott, producer, Anzac Girls
Rachel Landers and Kate Aubusson, Director and presenter, Lest We Forget What?
Andrew Anastasios, screenwriter, The Water Diviner

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**CAROLYN HOLBROOK, Anzac from the Bottom Up**

Commentators seeking to explain the extraordinary resurgence of the Anzac legend in recent years have looked most often to our political culture, claiming that state-sponsored propaganda is brainwashing Australians—particularly young Australians—about the centrality of the Anzac legend to the national story. But the ‘top-down’ behaviour of politicians only partly explains the revival of Anzac. This presentation considers Anzac commemoration from the bottom-up. It explores how family historians, writers and film-makers have forged a new version of the Anzac legend since the 1980s, which emphasises trauma and tragedy over triumphal nationalism. It also considers representations of Anzac in consumer culture, from the highly successful ‘raise a glass’ campaign by Victoria Bitter to Woolworths’ disastrous ‘Fresh in Our Memories’ promotion.

Carolyn Holbrook is a research fellow in the School of Social Sciences at Monash University. Her book about the history of Australian memory of the Great War, Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography, was published by New South in 2014.

**ANNA CLARK, Anzac and everyday historical consciousness**

There has been increasing public and historiographical debate over the Anzac revival. While some reflect positively on growing popular connections to all things Anzac as a sign of history’s strength, others warn such nostalgia must not come at the expense of critical historical engagement. But what does this reveal about Australians’ sense of history? This paper goes into household kitchens, neighbourhood tea-rooms and community centres around Australia to ask what people think of Australia’s commemorative past? Drawing on a national research project, it explores the meaning of the Anzac commemoration as a function of everyday historical consciousness.

Anna Clark is an Australian Research Council Future Fellow in Public History at the University of Technology, Sydney. With Stuart Macintyre, she wrote the History Wars in 2003, which was awarded the NSW Premier’s Prize for Australian History and the Queensland Premier’s Prize for Best Literary or Media Work Advancing Public Debate. Her PhD thesis, Teaching the Nation, was published by Melbourne University Press in 2006 and examines debates about teaching Australian history in schools. Follow up research, History’s Children: History Wars in the Classroom (New South, 2008), used interviews with 250 history teachers, students and curriculum officials from around Australia to explore Australian history teaching in school. She has also written two history books for children, Convicted! and Explored! Anna’s current project, Private Lives, Public History, uses interviews with 100 Australians from around the country to consider and include their thoughts on history alongside public and political discussions about the past and will be published by Melbourne University Press in 2016.

**DANIEL REYNAUD, Anzac cinema**

The evolution of popular conceptions of Anzac has been closely entwined with Australian cinema for all but its most recent history. Key developments in the Anzac legend have been both led and reflected in seminal Australian films from The Hero of the Dardanelles in 1915 to the mini-series Anzacs in 1985. But from the 1990s onwards the Anzac legend has developed a central cultural role in Australia almost entirely without any engagement with the cinema. This paper explores the ways in which cinema and Anzac have interacted over 100 years, seeking to understand their influence on each other and account for the separation of recent decades.
Associate Professor Daniel Reynaud lectures in history at Avondale College of Higher Education. He is the author of *Celluloid Anzacs* (2007), a study of Australian Great War cinema to 1990, as well as many book chapters and journal articles on Anzac cinema. His most recent work has been on religion and Anzac, most notably *The Man the Anzacs Revered*, the biography of legendary Anzac chaplain William McKenzie.

Fay Anderson, *Deadline Gallipoli*

On 27 December 1917, David Lloyd George, the wartime British prime minister, confided to CP Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, that ‘if people really knew, the war would be stopped tomorrow. But of course they don’t know, and they can’t know. The correspondents don’t write and the censorship would not let them pass the truth.’

It was no different for the Australian journalists who were also forbidden to expose military failure or fragility. The war, as articulated by the Australian press, shaped one of our most important narratives, the Anzac legend. And two parallel themes—the unique Australian character and the birth of a nation—originated with the popular press. The war also established the reputation of the Australian official war correspondent, Charles Bean, who immortalised the exploits of the Anzacs and created a national monument in their honour. Several other journalists played seminal roles: Keith Murdoch, Phillip Schuler and the British correspondent, Ellis Ashmead Bartlett. One hundred year later, the military and political censorship from the frontline prevails, as well as the centrality of the Anzac legend.

To commemorate the centenary, television networks produced a stream of television events and Gallipoli themed dramas anticipating a wave of interest. But the viewers failed to turn on their televisions or to keep them on. With a particular focus on the drama, *Deadline Gallipoli*, I wish to explore how Gallipoli and Australian journalism was portrayed and the public response to the slew of Gallipoli dramas.

As Samuel Hynes reminds us World War I was the great military and political event of its times; but it was also the great imaginative event. Our filmmakers have recently attempted to portray the war in a more nuanced, truthful and less sanitised way, devoid of the jingoism of the past but found that audiences preferred to watch *I’m a Celebrity … Get Me Out of Here!*

How did filmmakers imagine the meaning of Anzac and why didn’t it resonate with the public?

Fay Anderson is an Associate Professor in the School of Media, Film and Journalism at Monash University. Her co-authored book, *Witnesses to War: The History of Australian Conflict Reporting*, was published in 2011. She is a chief investigator of the Australian Research Council Linkage Grant with Sally Young, Kate Darian-Smith and Michael Gawenda and with their partners, the National Library of Australia and the Walkley Foundation, to investigate the history of Australian press photography. Their co-authored book, *Chasing the Picture: Australian Press Photography*, will be published in 2016 by Melbourne University Publishing.

Kylie Flack, *Baptism by fiction? Representations of Anzac in Australian junior historical fiction since 2000*

Australian writers of children’s historical fiction in the twenty first century are engaging with war-related subjects, including that of ‘Anzac’, on an unprecedented scale. Indeed, contemporary novels and picture books for a junior audience often work to confirm popular understandings of Anzac in ways that confirm its importance as a foundational national narrative. As Marilyn Lake points out in *What’s Wrong with Anzac?* (2010), production of such narratives around Anzac for children implies their positioning as future custodians of the Anzac legend.
Through reference to selected junior novels and picture books, this paper explores how Anzac has been represented in junior historical fiction since 2000, contending that although many authors convey the horror of war in ways that complicate popular understandings of Anzac for children, the tendency to conflate pride in ‘Anzac’ with Australian national identity remains a compelling metanarrative.

Following a fifteen-year career in public sector policy and corporate writing roles, **Kylie Flack** commenced as a PhD candidate in the Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations at Macquarie University in 2012. Her key research interests revolve around Australian historical products for children, particularly historical fiction and the notion of including representations of the past for children in Australian historiographical conversations.

**Tom Sear, Anzac Selfies & Avatars: Hyper-connective commemoration and Anzac Day 2015**

The era of digital commemoration has begun. The internet has created new spaces for our participation in commemorative activities, and new ways to tell commemorative narratives. The data these activities have generated promises to reveal more about the intimate, social and civil dynamics of contemporary commemorative cultures.

With a particular focus on the rise of the ‘Anzac Selfie’, and the animation of historical figures with Twitter and Facebook profiles, the paper will reflect on how changing contemporary notions of ‘the self’, and their relationship to history in a post-digital age, impact on what and who is celebrated in the commemorative remembering of the Gallipoli Centenary.

**Tom Sear** is a UNSW Canberra PhD candidate at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). His thesis examines the digital and web-based technologies in the centenary commemorations of World War I. Tom completed honours in history at the University of Sydney, and has worked as a research manager, freelance curator and historian.

**Maggie Patton, ‘See the world through their eyes’: Commemoration and community engagement through the European War Collecting Project**

In December 1918, the Mitchell Library embarked on an unprecedented collecting project to purchase private diaries written by servicemen and nurses for its collection. In the post war period, when memorials were being built and lost men remembered, this collecting project was the Library’s response to the memorializing taking place in Australian society. One hundred years on, the Library holds one of the largest collections of private diaries from World War I in Australia. Over 550 collections of diaries and correspondence reveal the personal voices and experiences of Australian men and women who went to the Great War.

With the centenary of the war in 2014, this collection was digitised and has been accessed heavily by the general public and researchers over the past year. There has been strong and enduring public interest in the personal accounts of those who served. This interest has been demonstrated through attendance at the State Library’s major 2014 exhibition, *Life Interrupted: personal diaries from World War I* and through a myriad of public programs and commemoration activities held by the State Library including participation in Tony Robinson’s *Time Walk* series in regional New South Wales.
This paper will focus on the Library’s role in memorialising and commemorating World War I. It will describe the post war collecting project and the recent digitisation project which released over 180,000 pages of letters and diaries, then examine community engagement and reaction to the centenary commemorations including responses to the *Life Interrupted* exhibition and public programs which have been held by the Library.

**Maggie Patton** is the Manager, Research & Discovery at the State Library of New South Wales. She is responsible for leading the curatorial team in the Research and Discovery Branch. Maggie provides expert advice on activities that develop, interpret, and promote discovery and engagement with the significant and unique State Library’s collections. Maggie also undertakes research on the collections for exhibitions and publication.

Since joining the Library Maggie has held a number of positions in reference and information services, collection management, online curation and digitisation projects. Maggie has a particular interest in maps and rare books and is working on a range of projects to enhance discovery online through digitisation and digital channels, using emerging technologies to build a range of digital experiences connecting researchers with both contemporary and heritage collections.

**Making Anzac histories: panellists**

**Christopher Lee**
A former journalist and foreign correspondent, Christopher Lee is the originating writer of many of Australia’s most popular TV dramas including *Police Rescue*, *Big Sky*, *The Secret Life of Us* and *Rush*. He wrote the screenplays for the mini-series *Paper Giants: The Birth of Cleo* for the ABC, *Howzat! Kerry Packer’s War* and the eight-hour mini-series *Gallipoli* for the Nine Network. He is the author of the novel *Bush Week*, the book *Howzat! Kerry Packer’s War* and the novella *Seasons of War*, recently published by Penguin. He has been awarded the Centenary Medal, four Australian Writers Guild Awards, the Queensland Premier’s Literary Award and the Fox Fellowship for Screenwriting Excellence.

**Lisa Scott**
With an extensive television drama career spanning over twenty-five years, Lisa’s recent credits are as lead Producer on *ANZAC Girls* and Producer on *Janet King* with Karl Zwicky. *ANZAC Girls* was ABC’s highest rating drama in 2014 and *Janet King* was number three. Distributed by the UK’s All3Media, *ANZAC Girls* sold to several territories including Channel Four’s More4 and Acorn TV in the US. The New York Times said, “among coming-of-age melodramas, Anzac Girls is at the glossy, sweeping, high-class end of the spectrum”. *Janet King* sold into Canada (CBC) as the first Australian drama to premiere on the CBC Selects series. *ANZAC Girls* and *Janet King* garnered six 2015 AACTA nominations including Best Series for *Janet King*. *ANZAC Girls* won the Australian Writers Guild award (2014) for Best Mini Series (Adapted), was nominated for Best Series in the Screen Producers Australia awards (2014) and was voted Best Drama by TV audiences in New Zealand in their TV Guide “Best on the Box” Awards. *Janet King* and *ANZAC Girls* were nominated in the Outstanding Drama and Outstanding Mini Series categories in the 2015 Logie Awards. *ANZAC Girls* was also nominated in the 2015 Golden Nymph Awards held in Monte Carlo.
Rachel Landers
Rachel completed a PhD in history at the University of Sydney and a post-graduate directing diploma at the National Institute of Dramatic Art. Working in theatre after graduation, she then moved into film as a writer/director and producer of drama and documentary. Her films have screened at numerous international festivals, been broadcast all over the world and have won and been nominated for a number of awards.

At the end of 2011 Rachel was awarded the 2011 NSW Premier’s History Fellowship and appointed Head of Documentary at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School. In 2012 she relaunched the AFTRS Documentary Department with a ground breaking curriculum, offering world-class training in non-fiction filmmaking. In 2013 Rachel was the keynote speaker for the NSW Premier’s History Awards.

In 2014/15, in addition to working at AFTRS, she completed production on the ABC/Screen Australia funded documentary Lest We Forget What? for the Centenary of World War 1 and is completing her first non-fiction book for New South Books that will be published in 2016.

Kate Abusson
Kate is a reporter with the Sydney Morning Herald, radio journalist and film critic. She graduated from Macquarie University in 2011, taking full advantage of the university’s modern and ancient history courses.

Kate's work has been published by national and international media outlets including Time magazine, Fairfax and News Ltd, the UK’s Monocle24 and is a regular film critic and commentator on ABC radio. She spent several months in working as a journalist in Accra, Ghana for the national newspaper The Ghanaian Times, travelling throughout West Africa to report on regional, political and social affairs including the Ghana’s first oil drill and the plight of Liberian refugees.

Having worked as a researcher at the University of Technology, Sydney during her studies, Kate went on to become a medical journalist for Cirrus Media most recently as senior journalist for Australian Doctor magazine. Kate was also the youngest founding committee member of the national Women in Media initiative that aims to empower Australian women in the industry.

She joined the Pony Films team in 2014 to embark on an epic journey across continents to discover: when Australians say ‘Lest We Forget’, what are we supposed to remember?

Andrew Anastasios
Andrew is screenwriter, script editor and producer with a strong interest in historical narratives. He is currently writing, script editing and co-producing the series Jack Irish for Essential Media. He has a number of projects in development, including feature film The Cartographer with South Pacific Pictures.

Andrew co-wrote (with Andrew Knight) The Water Diviner, for which he was nominated for an AACTA Award for Best Original Screenplay and an AWGIE Award for Best Writing in an Original Feature Film. It was directed by and starred Russell Crowe.

His other recent credits include the series Australia: The Story of Us (Essential Media/Network Seven), and as script editor The Broken Shore for the ABC, as well as Bad Debts, Bad Tide and Dead Point in the Jack Irish series.
Andrew holds a Masters of Arts in History and Archaeology from the University of Melbourne. His academic background has equipped him with exceptional research skills which he utilises to create assured cinematic narratives from a wide range of source material.

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