

# blackheath history forum

2014 Season  
August 2 - October 25

The *Past* in the Present

Venue: Blackheath Public School Hall, cnr Great Western Highway & Leichhardt St, Blackheath

Entry: \$5

Wheelchair access.

The hall is heated.

Time: Lectures are held Saturday fortnightly at 4pm. Refreshments available from 3.30pm

[www.blackheathhistoryforum.org.au](http://www.blackheathhistoryforum.org.au)

August 2: Jenny Hocking (Monash University)

## GOUGH WHITLAM: HIS TIME

Gough Whitlam: His Time is the second of Jenny Hocking's definitive two-volume biography. It begins with the historic election victory in December 1972 when Whitlam became Australia's twenty-first prime minister. In barely three years his dramatic reform agenda would transform Australia but it ended with the entire government's dismissal by the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr. Hocking's biography has brought significant new material to light regarding the dismissal. It has also prompted a reassessment of Whitlam's life after politics, in particular his term as Australia's Ambassador to UNESCO, and the strength of his relationship with his wife Margaret Whitlam. For this is also the story of a remarkable political marriage and an enduring partnership.

August 9: Bob Howard, Diarmuid Maguire and Bob O'Neill

## AUGUST 1914 – THEN & NOW

(Joint session with the Blackheath Philosophy Forum to be held at the Blackheath Community Centre Hall)

World War I was the pivotal event that shaped the 20th century. Historians and political theorists have debated the circumstances that led to the war ever since. Some point to disturbing parallels with our own time. Bob Howard and Diarmuid Maguire are international relations lecturers at the University of Sydney. Bob O'Neill is the former Chichele Professor of the History of War at the University of Oxford and the founding Chair of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

August 16: Babette Smith (University of New England)

## THE MAKING OF THE AUSTRALIAN WORKING CLASS – AN IRISH PERSPECTIVE

Following a sample of 250 Irish convicts from her new book *The Luck of the Irish*, Babette Smith argues that a distinctive Australian working class was established far earlier than usually assumed. They landed at a time when the so-called slave colony was at its height, when the lash and the chain gang were said to rule. As members of the first European minority in Australia, we assume they faced discrimination, poverty, and sectarianism from the start. Yet, Irishmen found unexpected power in the penal colony from where they helped create 'the Australian way of life'.

August 30: Joan Beaumont (Australian National University)

## AUSTRALIA AND WORLD WAR I: A CLASH OF VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

World War I is often remembered as futile: a maw into which millions of young men's lives were poured by incompetent and heartless generals and politicians. But for many of the men and women who fought the war, and for their communities at home, there were vital national interests at stake. Moreover, the war generated a passionate debate on the Australian home front about values and principles. The conscription referenda of 1916 and 1917 raised profound questions about the power of the State to compel individuals to kill, the obligations of citizens to subordinate their needs to the collective good, and the equality of sacrifice in time of war. Not surprisingly the bitter conscription campaigns left Australia divided for at least a generation. They continue to shape public policy and attitudes today.

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September 13: Alan Atkinson (University of Sydney)

**'THE EUROPEANS IN AUSTRALIA': A LONG VIEW OF WHITE SETTLEMENT**

Alan Atkinson's epic three-volume history attempts to come to terms with how white settlers in Australia formed themselves into local and national communities, and how these communities worked, up to and including the First World War. One of his great themes is the question of communication, the way we deal with each other, face-to-face and at a distance, and how we imagine each other, our homes and country, as a result. In his final volume the emergence of mass literacy and what he calls 'organised intelligence' become the key shapers of ordinary life. Federation was one result and another was the way Australians experienced the war.

September 27: Paul Barry (ABC Media Watch)

**THE FUTURE OF THE MURDOCH EMPIRE: SEX, LIES, AND THE MURDOCH SUCCESSION**

At the age of 83, Rupert Murdoch has divorced his third wife Wendi Deng and is gearing up for the toughest challenge of his life: to hand his empire on to his children. But is this the end of the Murdoch dynasty? Lachlan doesn't want to succeed him. James is in disgrace. And Elisabeth is not a serious contender. His grip on the group has also been weakened by the British phone hacking scandal. But Rupert thrives on crisis. He has recently split News Corp in two, doubled his fortune to US\$9 billion, and is bouncing around like a man in his prime. So can he win this one last battle and keep it all in the family?

October 11: Iain McCalman (University of Sydney)

**DISCOVERING THE LIFE AND DEATH OF CORAL: CHARLIE VERON — AN AUSTRALIAN DARWIN**

In July 2009, at a special lecture of the Royal Society in London, J.E.N 'Charlie' Veron, Darwin medalist, famed Australian coral scientist, and discoverer of over twenty percent of the world's corals, predicted the impending extinction of the Great Barrier Reef. In this talk McCalman will tell the story of how this passionate, unorthodox scientist — nicknamed after Darwin — came to this grim realization. Veron's *A Reef in Time: The Great Barrier Reef from Beginning to End* (2008) argues that corals provide an early warning system of larger and potentially catastrophic global environmental changes already underway. Our planet's sixth mass extinction beckons.

October 25: Paul Ham (freelance historian)

**WAS THE GREAT WAR INEVITABLE?**

Ham proposes to dismantle the argument that the world was somehow doomed to fight the Great War, and there was nothing mere men could do to arrest the immense forces gathering to destroy European civilization as they knew it. He will also challenge the received wisdom that continues to claim either that European leaders sleepwalked into war; or that it was absolutely 'necessary', in the eyes of the British, French and Russians to destroy Europe's fastest growing economy and greatest perceived threat: Germany. On the contrary, he will argue that the war unleashed in August 1914 was avoidable, unnecessary, and unjust, in the sense that it was in nobody's national interest to launch this conflict.

**WORLD WAR I FILM FEST**

We intend to stage a weekend of WWI films at Mt Vic Flicks!  
Keep your diaries free for November 8-9. Stay tuned for the Coming Attractions!

Thanks to Alan Coggins for designing and managing our website [www.simplycomputing.com.au](http://www.simplycomputing.com.au) | brochure design Jo See

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