Pro-communist Soviet displaced persons in Australia (360)

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Though Soviet Displaced Persons (DPs) resettled in Australia in the post-war period were usually strongly anti-communist, this was not always the case. This paper examines the Russian Social Club on George Street, Sydney, during the 1940s and 1950s, providing an intimate glimpse of migrant involvement on the political Left. This microhistory primarily draws upon recently released intelligence records from the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and Soviet Repatriation Office files to explore the lives of DPs on the political and social margins of early Cold War Australia.
This abstract book contains descriptions of all presentations at AHA2018, including the keynote addresses, plenary panel, lunchtime forums, roundtable discussions, and individual papers. It also includes an email address, website or twitter handle for each presenter, if provided.

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Dorothy Kass
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Visions for school education in Australia between the wars

In 1937, the New Education Fellowship, an organisation with branches in many countries, held a major educational conference in Australia, with international speakers who travelled to each of the Australian capitals. Several days of lectures and associated activities in each city were attended by thousands of teachers, lecturers and others interested in the potential of education and the need for reform. In the 1920s and 1930s, many educationists remained interested in continuing the momentum of reform which had occurred in the first decades of the new century in Australia. Yet the interwar decades have also been characterised as an overall reactionary period for educational policy and practice. This paper explores ideas relating to the education of children along with those individuals who advocated and agitated, formed associations, and introduced progressive practices in schools.

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Edward Ryan

Three leaves: Cross-cultural plant knowledge in north-west Victoria

This paper examines three lists of plants collected and viewed as representative samples of particular ecologies in north-west Victoria in the colonial period, between 1850 and 1870. All three collections were made by Aboriginal people on their own traditional lands in conjunction with Europeans engaged with the landscapes and Indigenous peoples in question. The landscapes vary from riverine plain, through hill and swamp country, to semi-arid sandy plain. The common, scientific and Indigenous names provided for the plants enable us in most cases to identify the specimens. As they also provide us with an illustration of how particular plants were viewed and what was seen as being important about them, these lists also give us an insight, the mindset of the people concerned. The emerging European science of plant taxonomy can be viewed in parallel with Indigenous classifications in order to see how plants were viewed in both systems of knowledge. A look back at what survives of the historical flora can show us what has been lost, at the same time that a view of their cultural contexts can show us what may be retrieved for the future.

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Did speculation in land pay off for British investors in Adelaide? 1835-1850

In 1834, Britain's Parliament passed the South Australia Act establishing South Australia as a colony. By December 1835, 130 British investors had purchased 437 priority land orders (PLO) at £81 per order, allowing selection of a surveyed one-acre lot in the capital city of Adelaide and 134 surveyed country acres. In March 1837, PLO investors selected 437 lots from 1,042 surveyed Adelaide lots, with remaining lots sold one week later at auction. Investors who sold city lots in 1838/1839 earned on average 35 times initial investment, while investors who held until 1850/1852 saw assessed value of Adelaide lots and buildings increase on average 39 times initial investment in the lot. Initial Investors were generally able to identify higher-value lots, as higher prices paid for lots in 1837 predict higher sales prices in 1838/1839 and early selection and higher prices paid in 1837 predict higher assessed property values in 1850.

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Australian military psychiatry from South Africa to the First World War

Australian histories of military psychiatry position the First World War as a starting point, pointing to the unprecedented incidence of psychological trauma, initially named shell shock, as a motivator in medical and psychological practice. However, this was not the beginning of Australian military psychiatric practice, as authorities encountered psychological casualties of war as early as the South African War (1899-1902), albeit on a smaller scale. In fact, links exist between the war in South Africa and the First World War in terms of military-medical attitudes towards psychiatric disorders, affecting battlefield diagnosis and treatment. Underlying the beliefs of many physicians during and after both conflicts was the concept that ideal Australian masculinity precluded psychological trauma, which resulted in an emphasis on physical diagnosis and treatments, as well as the attachment of morality, or lack thereof, to claims by soldiers of neurosis. This article positions military psychiatry as a constantly evolving practice, analysing the parallels between the wars with newly uncovered evidence from the South African War. It argues that these links necessitate a reconfiguration of the Australian historiography of military psychiatry, incorporating the South African War, and repositioning the First World War as a ground-breaking catalyst.

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late nineteenth century Dean Case. This includes how to compose biographies when the source material available is inadequate and, or, unreliable, but still remain historically diligent.
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Spies & hooligans: Pro-communist Soviet displaced persons in Australia

Though Soviet Displaced Persons (DPs) resettled in Australia in the post-war period were usually strongly anti-communist, this was not always the case. This paper examines the Russian Social Club on George Street, Sydney, during the 1940s and 1950s, providing an intimate glimpse of migrant involvement on the political Left. This microhistory primarily draws upon recently released intelligence records from the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and Soviet Repatriation Office files to explore the lives of DPs on the political and social margins of early Cold War Australia.

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