



Founded 1926

# HISTORY WEST

PUBLISHED BY THE ROYAL WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

## GENERAL MEETING

May 2017

**The next meeting at Stirling House is on Wednesday 17 May at 6pm when Dr Bob Reece will present a paper on 'Richard McBride Brown: Fremantle's Government Resident, 1835-1858'.**

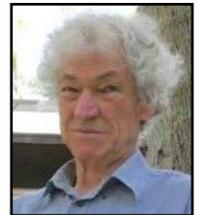
**Refreshments available from 5.30pm; Bookshop open until 6pm.**

Part of James Stirling's plan for Swan River Colony was the appointment of Government Residents in Fremantle, Guildford, York, Toodyay, Augusta and King George's Sound. Selected for their military service, their position was more symbolic than substantial.

After brief terms under Capt. Thomas Bannister (1830) and George Leake (1831-1834), Fremantle in early 1835 came under Richard McBride Brown, younger brother of the first Colonial Secretary, Peter Nicholas Brown. Richard arrived with Peter on the *Parmelia* in June 1829 but remained a private settler until becoming a government clerk and then Collector of Colonial Revenue at Fremantle in 1832 where he remained until his death in 1858.

His marriage to Anne Leake, daughter of the colony's wealthiest man, meant they lived comfortably in Fremantle where he became a respectable figure after an early scandal involving his housekeeper. Apart from his demanding work as magistrate in an unruly port town where drinking and fighting were the main recreations, Richard met every ship to levy the excise duties on which the colony depended. After Anne's death in 1855, Richard took leave in England where he married again. The absence of diaries and letters means we have to rely on newspapers and official correspondence for information about him. Nevertheless, they help chart the progress of a town whose character changed dramatically with the introduction of convicts in 1850.

**Dr Bob Reece** is Professor Emeritus in History at Murdoch University and President of the Fremantle History Society. His first publications were in Aboriginal History and he went on to specialise in the history of Sarawak (Borneo). More recently he has published articles on the history of the Benedictine Aboriginal mission and of Fremantle. His most recent book is *The Invincibles: New Norcia's Aboriginal Cricketers 1879-1906* (2014).



## The Great Ride



Carmel Charlton

**Carmel Charlton**, talented singer, musician and composer, provided members with an enjoyable evening of history and entertainment on 6 April as she wove together songs, poems, photographs, personal letters and maps to tell the story of the Light Horse at war in 1918. We were shown the human experience of the 10th Light Horse Regiment and the Australian Mounted Division as the men rode and fought their way through Palestine to Damascus in what has become known as the Great Ride. A personal letter written by Trooper Ned Moriarty to his sister helped bring the story to life. Carmel's evocative history-telling engaged her audience; the more so because of the presence of family members who (from their childhood) still remember with love and sadness some of these returned Light Horsemen.



Ned Moriarty



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Culture and the Arts**



At its meeting held on 13 April business included the following where Council

• welcomed new members – Yvonne Doncaster, Dorothy Farrell, Sandra Hayward, Roslyn Park, Dr Patricia Spencer, Katarina Steric;

- welcomed the success of the Second Hand Book Sale, thanked all volunteers, acknowledged the work of the Book Sale team, and recognised the generous book donations and the comprehensive media coverage;
- confirmed arrangements for the visit of the Freshwater Bay Rotary Club to Stirling House;
- noted that members are responding to requests to take books of raffle tickets to sell by the end of May;
- welcomed the Affiliated Societies' report that the Annual State History Conference, hosted by Wanneroo and Districts Historical Society, is proceeding to plan;
- regretted that the Society had been unsuccessful in its application for Catalyst Australian Arts & Culture funding;
- appointed Councillor Nick Drew as assistant treasurer;
- congratulated Wendy Lugg, Artist in Residence, on the successful completion of the Gallipoli Ambulance Flag project;
- thanked Kerry Eivers, member, for organising the successful performance event of The Great Ride by Carmel Charlton;
- welcomed the recommendation that Councillor Lorraine Clarke attend the Museums Galleries Australia WA 'Happy Museum' Project Masterclass Professional Development Workshop;
- applauded the growing use of the new website by researchers, with 292 unique user visits in March;
- welcomed the initial visit to the Society of the Leadership WA - Rising Leadership team winners selected to work on a Bequest strategy and other Council projects for the next six months.

**Lennie McCall**

## Diary Dates

**Fri 19 May:** Charles Harper and his association with the Nursery and Fruit Growing Industry

**Sun 4 June:** 63rd Pioneers Memorial Service East Perth Cemeteries commemorating George Braithwaite Phillips (Anglican)

**Mon 5 June:** Western Australia Day - Society Raffle drawn

**Wed 14 June:** Booked in for a Cuppa  
May Members' Discount Code for eShop: Huttad4

## History in the City

At April's meeting, Melinda Tognini talked on the history of the War Widows' Guild in WA, giving us insights into her methods of research and her travels, particularly to Canberra in quest of more knowledge. Not only did war widows, who numbered 10,000 from World War II, have to face life without their partner but often they had children to raise and no income security. Their allotment ceased on the death of their husband and the War Widows' Pension was below the Basic Wage. With small children to support, many were in a destitute situation.

It was difficult for war widows to go out to work but Mrs Jessie Vasey, a war widow, established the War Widows' Craft Guild, where members could learn crafts to supplement their pensions. The Guild also became a lobby group to obtain better conditions for war widows. In November 1946 the Guild held its first meeting in Perth and began lobbying on accrued recreation leave, pensions, education benefits and health care. It wanted the pension recognised as compensation for the loss of husbands rather than a government handout. Fortunately there was a band of women who recognised their plight and were there to assist, notably Mrs Marjorie Le Souef, Mrs Learmonth and others.

History in the City's talk on 3 May will be given by Lee-Anne Ashley, 'Tales from our home: 80 years of dog rescue in WA'. By special permission, she will be accompanied by her very friendly rescue dog. History in the City is held on the first Wednesday of each month at 2pm at the Citiplace Community Centre on Perth Railway Concourse. Donation \$5 entry with afternoon tea. Do join us.

**Lorraine Tholet**

### The 63<sup>rd</sup> Pioneers Memorial Service Sunday 4 June at 2.30pm St Bartholomew's Chapel, East Perth.

In commemoration of **George Braithwaite Phillips**.

G.B. Phillips was born on 5 March 1836 in Perth to Martha (née Smith) and John Randell Phillips. He joined the civil service, becoming a Third Clerk in Colonial Secretary's Office in 1852, Secretary of WA Turf Club in 1869, Chief Clerk in Department and Assistant Colonial Secretary in 1872, Lieutenant in WA Troop of Volunteer Horse Artillery in 1874, a Member of the Weld Club in 1876, Acting Superintendent of Police in 1885, and Commissioner of Police in 1887.

George died on 26 March 1900, aged 64 years, and was buried the following day in the Church of England Cemetery.



Colour, kindness, music and delicious food were highlights of the Society's visit on Sunday 26 March to the Sikh Temple in Canning Vale where 34 members enjoyed an historical foray with a difference. We learned about ancient customs, rituals and cultural priorities – and also what our President looked like wearing an orange scarf and no shoes. Well done, Bob.



Respect for the covering of hair and removal of footwear are all our hosts ask of guests who are welcome to attend their gatherings and ceremonies. Sikhs, whose spiritual homeland is in the Punjab region of north-western India, promote gender equity, which is why it was a woman who greeted us in the temple before the music and songs in the Punjabi language. Sounds of drum and harmonium evoked Asia's far horizons.



Men of all ages take their turn in preparing and serving food. For us this early lunch was a vegetarian delight. The dining-cum-meeting room offered a choice of

bench seating at tables, or sitting cross-legged on the floor. The latter was a severe test of balance, suppleness and multicultural commitment.

Guru (teacher) Nanak (1469-1539) developed the core components of the Sikh religious philosophy at a time when many Indians were suffering feudalism, inequality and warring. Sikhs stress the paramountcy of togetherness, human dignity and harmony. In this respect their teachings are diametrically opposed to the sub-continent's caste system that many see as having perpetuated inequality for many centuries.

Our members appreciated this morning of hospitality and enlightenment. Quite a few have suggested we visit other communities whose ways we need to know more about. The rich mosaic that is Western Australia is one we can all appreciate.

**Patrick Cornish & Kerry Smith**

## A Book Sale Triumph!

Congratulations and many thanks to everyone who made our annual Second Hand Book Sale on 1-2 April a great success. As most members will know, this annual sale is vital to the Society's financial bottom line, so we are delighted to report that the total amount received over the weekend was about \$22,400, including \$1,805 from a successful auction. Book Shop sales of some \$1,100 added to the total.



At the weekend event we offered for sale some 15,000 books, most of which were sold. Following the close of sale volunteers packed 100 boxes of books destined for





not-for-profit organisations which had requested leftovers. Several Affiliated Societies also took some of these books for their local fund-raising events.



So many volunteers helped to make this two-day event a success that it is impossible to name individuals but very special thanks go to the Book Sale team who labour for months to sort, store and price the flood of items which members and the community donate. Our grateful thanks!

## Exhibiting at Guildford

On 26 March we again attended the Guildford Heritage festival as an exhibitor. The outside exhibition team of Dave Melvin, Marsha Sullivan and myself was ably assisted by Nick and Pamela Drew.

Setting up is always a rush but we had the job done just as people began streaming in. This year we were allocated two 3x3 metre pop-up tents that were a little cramped for our photo display and WA history books; so to create space we put one of our display boards outside the tents close to the walkway and displayed all our Guildford photos on this board. This proved a great crowd stopper that enticed people inside the tents to look at the rest of the displays.

After an early heavy shower of rain the skies cleared to a perfect cool clear day. Although, as luck would have it, both the Dockers and Eagles were playing matches during the day it didn't seem to affect crowd numbers. Our tents were pretty much full to capacity for most of the day, which was very pleasing. I did notice that people seemed to be looking at individual photos for a long time; then I realised they were reading the labels. This year we decided to add more information to our labels to make them more interesting. This often requires lots of research and solving of riddles. A picture may be worth a thousand words but a few well chosen words definitely enhances a picture.

One of the photos in our display was of the two-storeyed old Guildford girls' high school. A visitor asked to buy a copy of the photo and, when I asked why that particular picture, she said she had bought the school to use as a private residence. "What, all 22 rooms of it?" I asked and she replied, "Yes and every one is filled". The upshot was that we were invited to visit the old school at a time suitable to us.

Another lady was able to shed light on one of our unidentified Guildford bridges. She said she grew up in the area and that it was a demolished Helena River bridge; also that she thought there were some old piles still embedded in the riverbank – definitely one to check out.

Altogether a wonderful day at Guildford in beautiful surroundings at our favourite event of the year.

**Kerry Eivers**



(Above) Son of Eucla postmaster with his cat, 1910. Photographer Francis Bird visited to check buildings for overland communication to Albany. He noted that this little boy had never seen another child and was frightened of visitors.

**Albany Historical Society** tells us about a wonderful exhibition which has been housed in the Residency Building of the Great Southern Museum. *Yurlmun: Mokare Mia Boodja* which means *Returning to Mokare's Home Country* featured fourteen rare objects belonging to the Menang Noongar people, the traditional inhabitants of the Albany area. These objects have been stored in the British Museum's collection since the 1830s and, for the first time, returned to Menang Country. They include stone axes, spears, spearthrowers, knives and a postcard. Several were collected by the Government Resident, Dr Alexander Collie who developed a special friendship with Menang leader Mokare. The newsletter also tells the story of saving the old house at 36 Brunswick Rd.

*The Little Bottler*, newsletter of the **Colonial Bottle & Collectors Club** details the aerated water businesses in the heyday of the goldfields towns of Kanowna, Broad Arrow and Paddington – owned by Gustav Seebeck, Conrad Long, John V. Seebeck and Gomer Oliver. Success was short-lived in all cases and, to make a living, these families moved on to other businesses in other places.

Congratulations to the **Guildford Historical Society** and President Celia Miller for a most successful launch of the newly restored Guildford Colonial Gaol. On a perfect autumn morning a happy crowd celebrated with the Historical Society and the City of Swan (which spent \$250,000 on the renovation) with speeches, tours of the building and morning tea. The restoration uncovered new doorways and various artefacts, and will enable the Society to better tell the story of law and order in the early days of the colony. What a splendid local government – let's acknowledge the City of Swan as well as the achievement of the lively and committed members of Guildford Historical Society!



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## Don't miss the Australian Heritage Festival

The National Trusts are currently organising Australia's largest heritage event with a festival in each state and territory. The *Australian Heritage Festival* runs from **18 April to 21 May** and offers a variety of

performances, tours, exhibitions, family events and talks in cities and towns across Western Australia. Explore events online at **australianheritagefestival.org.au**

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**New Norcia's** 2017 *Friends* magazine reports on New Norcia's collection of Australian Judaeo-Christian art from the 1930s to the present. Don't forget to visit the exhibition of these works which is open throughout 2017. Another interesting article concerns "...of fine twisted linen, and blue, purple, and crimson yarns." (*Exodus 26:1*): *The steady progress of the New Norcia Ecclesiastical Textile Collection Storage Facility*. Almost 1200 pieces are held in the collection, at its core 30 items in the Spanish collection. Items from the collection are always on display rotation. The magazine also traces the history of New Norcia's farmland and the recent decision to lease the land, a departure from past practice but a practical necessity in changed times. And how many of you who enjoy walking have tried the Pilgrim Trail from Subiaco to New Norcia? It winds its way from St Joseph's Church in Subiaco, leaving the metropolitan area via the Swan River foreshore before heading to Bells Rapids through Walyunga National Park and Julimar forest to the town of Bolgart. The final leg leads up the Old Plains Road to New Norcia. The trail follows the footsteps of Dom Rosendo Salvado and is based on the Compostela de Santiago Camino Salvado trail in Spain. It offers a contemporary pilgrimage for those searching for reflection, connection and renewal. For more details see – <http://pilgrimtrail.com.au/> the trail/ or <http://www.caminosalvado.com/>

## Trove

Are you someone who helps to make **Trove** the Commonwealth government's fourth most heavily used website, behind the Bureau of Meteorology, Centrelink and the Department of Human Services, with more than 55,000 visitors a day? If so there's good news! The National Library of Australia has been given a funding boost including an upgrade for the digital resources portal. After cuts in 2015, there is now a \$16.4 million allocation over four years for digitising material and upgrading critical infrastructure. Remember when trawling through newspapers was a time-consuming and, in the end, overwhelming task? No more, and this injection of funds will help to ensure TROVE's viability and growth into the future.

## A valuable NSW initiative

'**The Pathfinders – the History of NSW Aboriginal Trackers**' is being developed by Michael Bennett, historian for Native Title Services Corp. The website (<http://pathfindersnsw.org.au>) provides an overview of the history of NSW trackers from 1862 when the current NSW Police Force was established, through to 1973 when the last tracker retired. There is also a timeline and information on the lives of individual trackers, including details on the police stations where they worked and lived, as well as the traditional language groups to which some of the trackers belonged. 'A good tracker could pick up the smallest change in the landscape and quickly work out in which direction a person or animal was moving'. Here is a NSW project well worth copying!

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## The Mines Department Camel-Breeding Programme.

Member **Dr Criena Fitzgerald** has carried out extensive research on goldfields health and social history, her most recent publication being *Turning Men Into Stone. A Social and Medical History of Silicosis in Western Australia 1890-1970*. This Spotlight features one of the byways of goldfields life which Criena found interesting.

Afghans, accompanied by their camels, were among the thousands who flocked to the colony with the discovery of gold. They set up businesses as merchants and carriers and used their camels to transport essential supplies to the mining centres springing up in the vast goldfields. In this environment they prospered, hiring camels out, mending saddles and harness, and carrying and carting all manner of goods.

Prospectors quickly learnt to use camels, which they purchased from Afghans, but the Afghans themselves were squeezed out as discriminatory legislation increased. The final blow to Afghan employment that had been seriously curtailed by the arrival of trains to many outback centres and the improvement of traversable roads was the establishment in 1904 of the WA Mines Department Camel Breeding Programme which had a deliberate policy of not employing Afghans in any capacity.

The aim of the Department's programme was to assist prospectors search for gold. A government camel farm was opened at Londonderry near Coolgardie to breed and keep the animals, initially with the purchase of 30 camels. The herd was increased with the addition of 38 cow camels, a young bull and one breeding bull in 1906.

The first Government Camel Agent was W. Leishmann, who was based at Menzies and loaned equipment, camels and horses to prospectors. Ten to twenty gallon tanks, hobbles and ropes were supplied with each camel. Thomas Rigby succeeded him in December 1904. The Agent was required to search for lost or strayed camels and, as feed became scarce, to travel miles into the bush for fodder and water. In November 1905, the Department dispensed with the services of its camel agents and kept all its camels at Londonderry.

Prospectors applying for the loan of camels were required to promise to take care of the camels, and to write regular reports about the state of the country they traversed, and the 'mineral and pastoral capabilities and water supply' of the area. In return they were loaned camels, pack saddles, hobbles harness, nose pegs and canteens of ten gallons [90 litres] each. Prospectors who were unable to support themselves received sustenance of £1 per week.

Prospectors were frequently a law unto themselves, and some took their camels as far away as South Australia. They also used the camels to earn money by carting goods for station owners or to collect sandalwood. Some simply were not up to the task of prospecting and used the sustenance money and their camels to eke out an existence in the bush. Others were unable to control their camels and sustained serious injury, one prospector dying in 1906 from a fractured leg when his camel attacked him while he was harnessing it for the day's work. Prospectors often refused to return their camels on time – if at all. Frequently, the police were called in to trace the men and reclaim the camels.

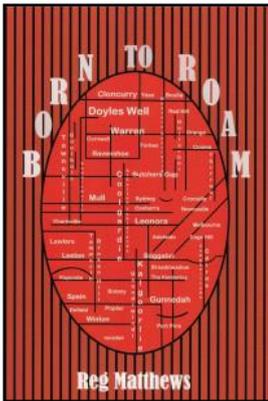
By 1916 the government concluded that the scheme was a failure. Nevertheless in 1917, as returned servicemen joined the ranks of prospectors, the government established the State Prospecting Board and began to finance prospecting parties. The Repatriation Department co-operated with the Board and provided extra finance for ex-soldier prospectors. While camels were still used, the Board began to loan more equipment such as picks, shovels, dry blowers, gelignite, and paid for petrol if men owned trucks. Horses and spring carts were also provided and the industry moved from exploration to production, albeit on a small scale.

The funding of prospectors by the Mines Department slowly ceased. Individual prospectors and their camels could still be found roaming the fields into the 1930s, but the comparative ease and safety of road transport made the use of camels obsolete. No longer valuable, the camels were set free to roam the bush. Australia now has the biggest wild camel population in the world, in 2016 numbering well over 400,000.

**Criena Fitzgerald**



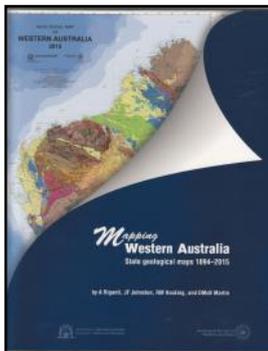
**Reg Matthews, *Born to Roam*, as compiled by Anne-Marie Wharrie, self-published, 2016. In Library.**



What a lively life story Reg has to tell and all of it spent moving around the country. Of greatest interest for us are his early memories of the Western Australian goldfields. His stockman father worked on and off for Sidney Kidman who owned the coach service to Leonora, Lawlers and Agnew in the 1920s. The family ran the remote Doyles Well Staging Post and Hotel

until Reg's mother died and the children were taken to live in Queensland. Anne-Marie Wharrie, who donated this book to the Library, has worked with Reg and together they have produced an entertaining account of a life more than ninety years long and lived to the full.

**A. Riganti, J.F. Johnston, R.M. Hocking & D. McB. Martin, *Mapping Western Australia: State geological maps 1894-2015*, Geological Survey of Western Australia, Perth, 2016, 39pp. In Library. SP \$35 MP \$34.**

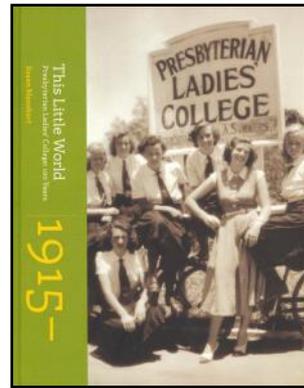


This publication is a useful reference tool introducing more than a century of mapping work by the Geological Survey of WA. Fourteen maps produced between 1894 and 2015 are featured while earlier regional maps are mentioned, the map series tracing the growth in geological knowledge of the

State and the development of new techniques in surveying and mapping. The identification of the succession of geologists who undertook this work and some brief biographical notes concerning some of them are useful for the general reader. Digital resources, available online, help those who are searching for more detailed information.

**Susan Maushart, *This Little World: Presbyterian Ladies' College 100 years 1915-2015*, UWA Publishing, Crawley, 2015. 415 pp. SP \$50 MP \$48.**

This lavishly presented, large sized, hard cover publication commemorates the centenary of the private girls' school known affectionately as PLC. The book is visually appealing, each page filled with striking images, most of them of the generations of girls who have become 'PLC girls'. It was written and designed to be 'brave bold and modern'. Susan Maushart – journalist, broadcaster and author – has chosen not to present a chronological or comprehensive history of



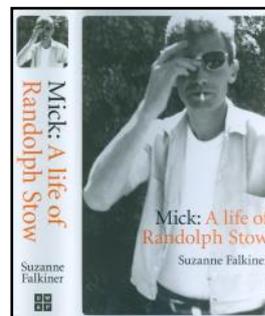
the school but instead to select interesting topics on which to focus the chapters, some in the form of photo essays. The people who made the school are presented – benefactors, Council chairs, principals, some teachers, long-standing families and the girls themselves – as well as many of the ideas and

emblems that have shaped the school's culture – Scots Presbyterianism, uniforms, crests and boarding house premises. The author is also keen to explore the institution's 'underbelly' – its disorder book – as well as its successes. The comprehensive lists which conclude the book – particular that of the girls themselves – will please all Old Girls and their families for whom the book has primarily been written.

## Book Review

**Suzanne Falkiner, *Mick: A Life of Randolph Stow*, UWA Publishing, Crawley, 2016. In Library. SP \$50 MP \$48.**

**Reviewer: Bob Reece**



Many people have wanted to write a biography of Julian Randolph Stow, but only the poet Suzanne Falkiner has stuck bravely to the daunting task. A virtual recluse during the last years until his death in May 2010, Randolph ('Mick') politely drove away even the most persistent would-be visitors. Intensely introspective

and solitary, he left little record of those last years. Prodigiously creative and *fêted* as a brilliant new star at twenty-one, his creative life in fiction and poetry was over, to all intents and purposes, by the time he reached fifty. Did he simply have nothing more to say, or was he by then too far removed by time and space from the sources of inspiration that had produced his stunning literary firework displays of earlier years? The decaying port of Harwich, to which he had finally retired to join what he called his own 'tribe' of East Anglians, reflected a long-felt need to belong to a true ethnic community but failed to furnish him with something to write about. It is sad to think that his creative energies were expended instead in pub quizzes.

At pains to emphasise that her book is not a critical evaluation of Stow's literary output, something that had already been done by others, Falkiner sets out instead to *contextualise* it. This she does brilliantly for his early life when he wrote long letters to his mother, female cousin and friends such as the poet, Bill Grono, from which she quotes at sometimes inordinate length. When his correspondence dries up, together with his writing of fiction and poetry, she has to depend on the testimony of

friends. The pickings are sometimes thin. Always elusive and ambiguous, Stow in later life became even more introspective and selectively communicative. To say that he is an elusive biographical subject would be a massive understatement.

The likely truth is that Stow possessed at least two personalities, further complicated by his alcoholism, addiction to tobacco and ambiguous sexuality. Eschewing any attempt at amateur psychoanalysis, Falkiner indicates that his pathologically uncommunicative father, Cedric Stow, was an acute depressive and implies that in all probability Mick inherited the fatal gene. Nevertheless, she is unwilling to join up all the dots that his two attempts at suicide, his alcoholism and unresolved sexuality suggest.

Beneath the layers of Stow's literary life that Falkiner excavates is the country boy from the mid-west of Western Australia, steeped in the traditions of his pastoralist ancestors, experienced in farm work and riding, and given to singing old shearers' songs when in his cups but at the same time aware of Aboriginal dispossession. In a real sense his autobiographical *Merry-Go-Round In The Sea* (1965) tells us what he understood about himself, at least his younger self, and Falkiner makes effective use of it.

What Falkiner gives us altogether (as she did in her similarly hefty 2011 biography of the English entomologist-turned-novelist E. Grant Watson), is a richly detailed chronicle of Stow's peripatetic but lonely life that assiduously avoids taking judgmental positions. Everything that was relevant has been carefully hoovered up and laid out for our inspection, but with little accompanying commentary. The trivial is mixed with the important in an indiscriminating way that will at times test the mettle of all except the most

earnest Stowophile. My favourite piece of 'textuality' is Falkiner's account of Guildford Grammar and its unnecessarily spartan regime where Stow showed his first signs of literary promise and his inability to suffer foolish authority figures gladly.

Altogether, this massive book of 890 pages tells us everything that has been recorded by and about the brilliant, unassuming and self-effacing Mick Stow, but throws disappointingly little light on what he was all about. Sadly, the hands of a ruthless editor and a good proof-reader are not in evidence, but Falkiner's exhaustive bibliography of Stow's writings is a valuable bonus.



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