

NEWS FROM THE AGM

At ALGA's recent annual general meeting, Graham Willett stepped down from the position of president, after 14 years in the position, but remains on the committee as secretary. Former secretary Mark Pendleton leaves the committee to take up an academic position in England. Daniel Marshall, formerly vice-president, takes on the position of president. Sarah Rood becomes vice-president, and we welcome to the committee a new member, Carla Sammut. Existing committee members Nick Henderson and Gary Jaynes (treasurer) remain.

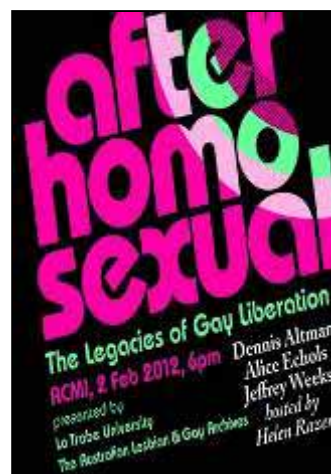
A vote of thanks to Graham for his contributions to ALGA as president was moved by David Menadue, spoken to by Gary Jaynes, and passed by acclamation. Since 1997, Graham has taken ALGA's profile to new levels with initiatives such as the annual history walks (several new routes developed in the past decade), homosexual histories conferences in Melbourne and other Australian cities, an annual thesis prize and, not least, through his writing. Graham's popular history columns for MCV are now appearing on the [ALGA website](#), and this year alone he has edited or co-edited three books on GLBT themes (details of these and more on the [ALGA website](#)). He's been the public face of ALGA all this time, regularly speaking to the community and mainstream media (a nice recent example is on MCV's website, "[A queer kind of collection](#)", 7 December 2011).

The meeting also thanked Mark for his work in various capacities over the past four years: media liaison, judge of the thesis prize, and most recently as secretary, where he was the friendly online face of ALGA to many enquirers. We especially thank Mark for his work in organising a memorable event at the Fitzroy Town Hall in 2008 to celebrate ALGA's 30th birthday. Mark is also a key organiser of the After *Homosexual* conference this coming February – more details in this bulletin. We'll miss him heaps – and wish him well in his new job.

ALGA's annual report and draft minutes from the AGM will be mailed to members soon.

AFTER HOMOSEXUAL CONFERENCE – THE OPENING EVENT

Previous bulletins have given details of the international conference co-sponsored by ALGA, **After Homosexual: the legacies of gay liberation**, to be held on 2-4 February as part of the 2012 Midsumma Festival (further information on the [conference website](#)). It is not too late to register. For those wanting to attend only the **opening event on Thursday night 2 February**, 6 pm at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, details are now available on the [Midsumma website](#): a panel of international figures in queer history and politics will discuss the impact of Dennis Altman's book and the legacies of gay liberation forty years on. It features Dennis, UK gay historian Jeffrey Weeks and American feminist academic and cultural historian Alice Echols, with emcee Helen Razer. A selection of archival film curated by ALGA will be part of the event. Tickets are selling now: cost \$17 full, \$14 concession - plus booking fee. Duration 1 hour. This event is likely to sell out, so tell your friends, make plans and book early.



OTHER MIDSUMMA DATES

Sunday 15 January. ALGA (and others!) will be at Carnival (at Birrarung Marr park again.) If you are there, do drop by our tent and say hi.

Sunday 22 January, 11 am. ALGA's Midsumma history walk, back to the CBD. Bookings essential as numbers are limited. Tickets via the [Midsumma](#) web site. Full price \$20 (\$15 for ALGA members), \$10 concession – plus booking fee.

NEW ON THE WEBSITE ...

are links to some fascinating [queer Australian archival film clips](#) that have been uploaded and logged by YouTube user kurvapicsa. The earliest clips date from the early 20th century. Highlights include the first Australian female-to-male cross dresser on film (1913), excerpts from early Australian television (among them Bert Newton advertising 'Gay-Life' shirts), and a gallery of underwear advertisements, starting with 'Beautiful Lines of Woman Triumphant' in the 1920s.

NEW INDEXES

Lee J has indexed many periodicals for ALGA over the years, and this year has completed ***Melbourne Gay Liberation Newsletter*** (1973-76, 321 records) and ***Sydney Gay Liberation Newsletter*** (1972-74, 252 records) - title, author, issue number, date and brief abstract for each record. Lee has also extended his previous index for of ***Campaign*** newspaper (1975-79, 3432 records) to the period April 1990 to July 1993 (1359 records), building on a select index of *Campaign* feature articles in this period done by Graham Carbery.

A new volunteer, Kristy, has joined ALGA's indexing ranks in 2011, completing the first two years of ***Wicked Women***, an Australian lesbian magazine which provided a forum for erotic ideas in the decade 1987-96.

In general we don't allow original material to leave the Archives, but we do hold duplicate sets of some of the major publications, if people are keen to take on an indexing project from home.

A list of ALGA's periodicals indexes is on the [ALGA website](#).

OTHER COLLECTION LISTS

Volunteers over the years have listed several collections of group records held by ALGA. With a few exceptions we haven't managed to list many personal collections, but in 2011 we've made some progress in that regard. Anton is about 70% through listing a large collection of papers from Ian Goller (1946-97). Ian's papers span c.1981-1991, over 1500 records listed so far, providing valuable insights into the Australian response to AIDS, particularly the public education and advocacy work undertaken by Ian in his roles with the Victorian AIDS Council and health authorities at the state and national levels. Trevor has listed a small but rich collection of papers from the late Bill Brooks. Bill's papers touch on the life of The Boilers social club, thought to be Australia's oldest gay group (formed 1959), and they are supplemented by photos (now digitized) and sample costumes (Bill was a professional dressmaker).

In 2011 committee member Nick Henderson has also introduced ALGA to the concept of finding aids for the collection. As well as lists of some personal collections (Margaret Bernasconi, Ralph McLean, Peter Tully), Nick has prepared guides to ALGA holdings on transgender and gender-questioning communities; GLBT material relating to the Northern Territory; and Indigenous gay and transgender (sistergirl) material. Taking up the concept, we have produced finding aids in response to recent researcher requests for the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, homophobic violence, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, and Jewish gays and lesbians.

A request has come to ALGA recently for help with listing and possibly digitising a private collection of papers from the Jewish GLBT group in Melbourne, [Aleph](#). Please email algarchives@hotmail.com if you would like to help with that project.

PRESERVATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMPLETED

ALGA was awarded a grant of \$4,400 in 2010 from the National Library of Australia's Community Heritage Grant program to conduct a preservation needs assessment. The consultation was completed recently by University of Melbourne's Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation and the final report and grant acquittal have now been submitted. The 75-page report finds we're doing a lot right – with our work on improving the physical environment and rehousing much of the collection into acid-free materials – but the report also offers specific recommendations on how we can better care for some parts of the collection, and also improve our disaster preparedness. Some of this we knew, but not all. Some recommendations require additional resources to implement. The CHG program requires applicants for its preservation grants to have first undertaken a significance assessment and a preservation needs assessment, both of which ALGA has now completed. We see the preservation needs report as a useful tool for planning and resourcing the most pressing needs. High on our list are projects for reducing wear and tear on the poster and oral history collections, which are two of the most significant parts of the collection, and suggested options for housing fabrics (costumes and banners in particular).

FAREWELL IAN MACNEILL, 1946–2011

The ALGA committee is saddened to record the death recently of Ian MacNeill – remembered by many of us for his contributions to gay writing in Australia over a long period – fiction, poetry and journalism.. He contributed to BlackWattle Press and its successor [gay-ebooks](#), where his friends and queer lit collaborators Laurin McKinnon and Gary Dunne have dedicated a page to Ian, with links to some of his work. Tributes there include a fine appreciation of Ian's work by Michael Hurley, author of *A guide to Australian lesbian and gay writing*. Following is an obituary by Gavin Harris, who spoke at the memorial service for Ian in Sydney on 2 December.

The year that karaoke invaded the Mardi Gras Party, Ian MacNeill donned a silver lame mini. It was an enviable op shop find. He wanted to channel Laurie Anderson's 'Oh Superman' at the karaoke bar. The organizers kept putting him off. Too down beat! Too arty! Till 4.00am, when they gave him his go. So when Kylie was wowing them in the Hordern, Ian had his moment. He was thrilled. He had inadvertently created another Mardi Gras legend.

Ian used Faerie drag to wonderful effect. He read poems in pillboxes and fascinators. He was Querelle of Glebe, all hullo–sailor, at Fair Day. He was Dusty Springfield, all mascara and mini, at her 'wake'. He appreciated faux leopard skin and divas and never missed 'Singers of Renown'.

Ian had a great talent for friendship. A kind, sharp, courageous and witty man, he shared his time, his food, his home, his leisure, his wisdom and his confidences with his very many (men and women) friends.

He had studied Eng Lit at Sydney University in the sixties – the Leavisite kind. And he had developed his own canon of queer classics. He loved Henry James, Constantine Cavafy, Christopher Isherwood, Tennessee Williams and Patrick White. But he claimed the right to contribute and to speak out. He helped invent gay writing as 'a thing-in-itself', recording and analysing his experiences and his estrangement from an inhospitable culture. Because, if he hadn't, no one else would know where he'd been.

Ian participated. He was at the demos, and at the very first Mardi Gras. He baked profoundly ugly cakes for The Boys Own Bakeoff. They were his answers to the Royal Easter Show, which he never missed. He wrote clever, respectful but challenging letters to Amnesty International, the Australian Society of Authors, academics and politicians, knowing that they couldn't acknowledge their myopias.

When another gay activist died of AIDS in 1985, Ian wrote about his funeral, concluding

We sisters and brothers were tired of one another, tired from the huge... effort we had made... But what we had done was create the possibility of gay lives. And those of us who seized that, are not without our integrity: success, happiness.

Ian contributed to all the anthologies and journals that have formed Australian gay and lesbian writing. He published books of poetry, essays, novels and *Sweet Horizons* (a history of the Solomon Islands) and wrote poems, plays, radio plays and film scripts. He got more than his share of rejection slips, probably because his work was so uncomfortable, edgy, camp. But what do you expect from someone who'd fought the Department of Education for its poofter-bashing culture.

He worked on himself, raising his own consciousness and developing his affections, tenderness, friendships, camaraderie and companionship in our high schools, at TAFE, in the Gay Teachers & Students Association, in the Gay Writers Group, in his neighbourhood.

When he was diagnosed with liver cancer, he said he didn't want to live in a world that had no Liz Taylor. He wrote poems to the end. He had to. Margot, his sister, Malcolm, his brother, and his very many friends, allies, colleagues and neighbours will always remember him with great affection.



Above: part of 'Querelle of Glebe' 1993, Gary Dunne – courtesy [gay-ebooks](#)

*A version of this obituary is expected to be published in the **Sydney Morning Herald**.*

THE STORY OF SANDRA WILLSON, 1939-1999

[ABC Radio National's Hindsight program](#) on 25 November 2011, "Tit for tat : the story of Sandra Willson". In 1977 Sandra Willson was the longest-serving female prisoner in NSW, having been found not guilty on the grounds of insanity in 1959 of murdering a stranger, 23-year-old taxi driver Rodney Woodgate, and sentenced to an indeterminate term at the Governor's pleasure. Even though she was declared sane after 11 years, it took a further seven years and a high-profile campaign by Women Behind Bars to secure Sandra Willson's release. Though lesbianism per se wasn't a crime in any Australian state, the enforcement of "exposure to moral danger" laws against lesbians played an important part in this case. The program includes recollections of Sandra Willson's friends and associates from prison days and later on when she worked in prison reform and prisoner rehabilitation, activists from Women Behind Bars, a niece of Rodney Woodgate, and commentary by Dr Rebecca Jennings, historian, who has been granted access to personal papers and court records of Sandra Willson. As well as the podcast, the Hindsight [website](#) contains photographs of Sandra Willson and Rodney Woodgate.

LINKS OF INTEREST

- ❖ **Oral history from PrideNZ**, a website for "queer voices from Aotearoa New Zealand"
Queer History 101 – by Dr Alison Laurie : http://www.pridenz.com/alison_laurie.html
Homosexual law reform – archival footage from the campaign which led to passage of NZ's Homosexual Law Reform Bill in 1986 : http://www.pridenz.com/homosexual_law_reform.html
Making a difference – interviews with eight Aucklanders in 2011 after a public nomination process about "making a positive difference in the queer community" : http://www.pridenz.com/making_a_difference.html and
The 2nd AsiaPacific Outgames Human Rights Conference, 2011 : <http://www.pridenz.com/apog.html> - includes short interviews with 60 participants, 12 of whom are Australian.
Online timeline : http://www.pridenz.com/historical_events.html
- ❖ **Christos Tsiolkas : Man behind The Slap**, in conversation with Geraldine Doogue on Compass, ABC Television, 9 October 2011 – <http://www.abc.net.au/compass/s3315704.htm>
- ❖ **Alice Anderson Vintage** – promo video for a book in search of a publisher, Loretta Smith's *Spanner in the works*, about the proprietor of a Melbourne garage run by women in the 1920s
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqIJHvyn8ME&feature=youtu.be>.
- ❖ **Glitter** – trailer for a recently released documentary about the Australian Radical Faeries
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ4j3oVChYw>. For more about Australian Radical Faeries, see www.ozfaeries.com, which includes an interesting [history page](#).
- ❖ **Endangered Archives blog** – <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/endangeredarchives/> An entry on 4 November 2011 describes [EAP128 Thai rainbow archives project](#): a digitised collection of Thai gay, lesbian and transgender publications, supported by the AsiaPacificQueer Network, the Australian Research Council, the Australian National University and the British Library, with the aim of preserving materials that have not been collected by any Thai institutional archive.



Alice Anderson

Best wishes for 2012

From the Australian Lesbian & Gay Archives Inc
PO Box 124, Parkville, Vic 3052

email: algarchives@hotmail.com,
website: www.alga.org.au