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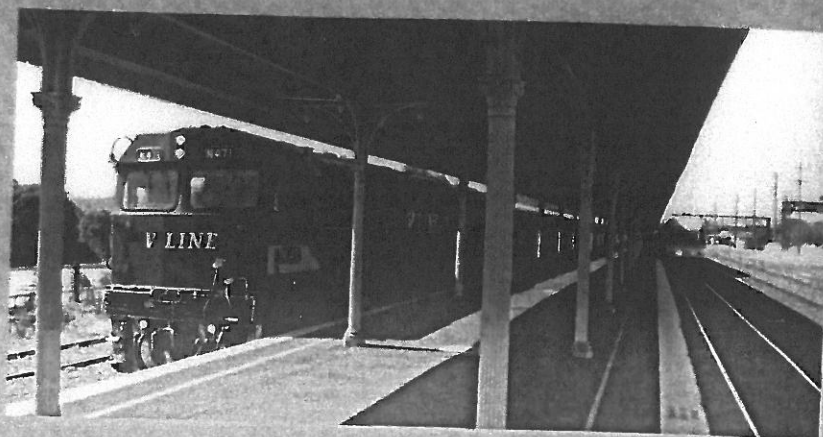
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#### IN THIS ISSUE

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'At all events on the through lines': the century-long journey to  
Australia's rail gauge unification SCOTT MARTIN

Prayer and Carbolic: reactions to the plague in Sydney in 1900  
MALCOLM D. PRENTIS

Tension Among Friends: internationalism in Sydney in 1923  
LES HETHERINGTON

James Ralfe and the Early Surveys at Port Macquarie TONY DAWSON

Crime Pays: women transported for forged bank notes  
CAROL LISTON AND KATHRINE M. REYNOLDS

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#### BOOK REVIEWS

Pauline Curby, *Independent Minds: a history of St George Girls High School*  
HELEN PROCTOR

Clive Hamilton, *What do we Want? The Story of Protest in Australia*  
BRUCE SCATES

Judith Godden, *Crown Street Women's Hospital: a history 1893-1983*  
TANYA EVANS

Jennifer Gall, *Looking for Rose Paterson: how family bush life nurtured  
Banjo the poet* PETER WOODLEY

Anne McMahon, *Floating Prisons: Irish convict hulks and voyages to  
New South Wales 1823-1837* KATHRINE M. REYNOLDS

Mark Dapin, *Jewish Anzacs: Jews in the Australian military* SUZANNE D. RUTLAND

Jayne Persian, *Beautiful Balts: from displaced persons to New Australians*  
BRUCE PENNAY

L. Ritter and J. B. Windeyer, *William & Mary Windeyer: law, politics  
and society in colonial New South Wales* CHRISTINE YEATS

John Ramsland, *Flying into Danger: the story of Paul Brickhill RAAF,  
the Australian who wrote The Great Escape, The Dam Busters and  
Reach for the Sky* CHRISTINE YEATS

Anisa Puri and Alistair Thompson, *Australian Lives: an intimate history*  
BEVERLEY KINGSTON



and others about the tightrope commissioned authors toe keeping clients, publishers and audiences happy with the histories they write. Books written to celebrate significant anniversaries and to memorialise centenaries (or 90 years of existence) have to negotiate a fine line between the evidence of the past and present political concerns.

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Jennifer Gall, *Looking for Rose Paterson: how family bush life nurtured Banjo the poet*, NLA Publishing, Canberra, 2017, 200 pages; ISBN 978 0 642 27892 0.

In April 1873, at Illalong near Binalong in New South Wales, Rose Paterson felt her isolation desperately, writing to her sister Nora in Queensland: 'I am in a state of semi-starvation for want of news. We might as well be on a desert island as here for all we know of the doings of the rest of the world or even of our own family.'

The central role of the correspondence with her sister in her emotional and intellectual life is revealed in letters that have been preserved by the National Library of Australia and presented in a lavish edition by curator, musicologist and historian Jennifer Gall. Dr Gall's previous publications include *In Bligh's Hand: surviving the mutiny on the Bounty* (NLA Publishing, Canberra, 2011).

Rose Paterson was born at Buckinbah station near Yeovil in 1844. She was the daughter of Emily Mary Darvall, well-travelled and educated daughter of a British army officer, and Robert Johnston Barton, who had been an East India Company naval officer and arrived in New South Wales in 1839 before turning to grazing. Rose married Andrew Bogle Paterson in 1863.

Paterson's pastoral investments in New South Wales and Queensland all floundered, so that Rose spent much of her adult life at Illalong, where Paterson once owned the property but then was installed by the new owners as the salaried manager. With her husband often absent, Rose raised seven children, feeling daily the contrast between the privileged life she had been born into and their reduced circumstances as un-propertied caretakers.

Gall invites the reader to find Rose's influence in her son 'Banjo' Paterson's writing without overstating the point. Rose is rightly the subject, not the object, of this work. Thematic chapters contextualise her letters to Nora between 1873 and 1888, revealing an elegant, witty and insightful writer, traversing topics such as childbirth and child raising, marriage, entertaining visitors, her children's education, and quotidian life on a rural property.

Rose displayed a strong middle-class faith in the power of education as a prerequisite for a prosperous and respectable life. She admired, and perhaps envied from a distance, the achievements (and opportunities) of

Nora's step-daughter, the author Rosa Campbell Praed.

One of the most revealing aspects of Rose's letters is just how connected and mobile the colonial squattocracy was. In 1873, a Mr and Mrs Beckham, formerly of Binalong, returned to stay with local households on a visit lasting five months! In 1880, Rose and two of her children travelled by horse and buggy from Illalong, 200 kilometres to Orange, stopping along the way at four properties where they were welcomed by close acquaintances. From Orange they travelled by train to Sydney, and stayed with Rose's mother Emily in Gladesville. A more straightforward trip to Sydney would have involved simply catching a train directly from Binalong.

Rose's horizons bear out Angela Woollacott's argument that this was a cosmopolitan class connected by marriage and mutual interest, seeded by people extensively tied to the broader British Empire, often based on military experience (*Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: self-government and imperial culture*, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2015).

The book contains shorter interspersed vignettes on topics such as Rose's literary tastes, and the role of music and the piano in colonial Australian culture. Colour reproductions of photographs, maps, paintings, excerpts from Rose's cross-written letters, dispersed among the text, showcase the richness of the National Library's collection. They also provide context to the narrative, although

occasionally the connection is strained; for example, when the well-known photograph of Charles Todd (of overland telegraph fame) and colleagues in South Australia is used to illustrate the sorts of shirts Rose might have mended and ironed at Illalong. The book includes a list of references and texts for further reading. The illustrations are thoroughly referenced.

This work does not pretend to be a bookish history, but rather a thoroughly well written and produced presentation and interpretation of some of the National Library of Australia's invaluable collection. It reminds us of how fortunate Australia is to have such an institution. Readers whose interest is piqued can find the complete collection in Colin Roderick's *Rose Paterson's Illalong Letters, 1873-1888* (Kangaroo Press, East Roseville, 2000), although it is presented far more austere.

Readers might be attracted by this book's association with Banjo Paterson, but they will read it to the end for Rose's eloquence and insight. She warrants a place in her own right beside the likes of Rachel Henning as a shrewd and articulate chronicler of colonial New South Wales. We will never know how Rose would have felt about her letters being shared with a wider readership, but I suspect that she would have been pleased with Jennifer Gall's sympathetic, whimsical stewardship.

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