

**Hunter Living Histories Meeting**  
**14<sup>th</sup> October 2019 1:00pm – 3:00pm**  
**University Council Room, IDC Building, Callaghan Campus**

**Minutes**

**Start: 1:00**

- 1. Acknowledgement to Country** by Ann Hardy
  
- 2. Present:** Gionni di Gravio, (Chair), Ann Hardy (Minute taker), Jessica Waugh, Coral Black, John Witte, Suzanne Martin. Howard Dick, Louise Gale, Maree Shilling, Ken Shilling, Judy Lindsey, Ross Edmonds, Brian Roach, Ron Barber, Lesley Gent, Peter Sherlock, Hugh Watt, Emeritus Professor John Fryer, Doug Lithgow, Paul Kiem, Tim Adams, Mark Rigby, Dael Alison, Denis Thurlow, Bronwyn Law, Bob James, Don Seton Wilkinson, Prof. Maree Gleeson, Robert Watson, Charles Martin, Suzanne Martin, Shehroz Mustafa, Keith Parsons, Dr Amir Rezapourmoghadammiyandabi.
  
- 3. Apologies:** Maria Pavela, Judy Lindsey, Maree Shilling, Ken Shilling, Emeritus Professor John Fryer, Suzie Gately, Jude Conway, Sarah Jansen.
  
- 4. Visitors :**
  
- 5. Confirmation of Previous Minutes 2 September 2019:** Louise Gale. Seconded Denis Thurlow.
  
- 6. Business arising from previous minutes: -**
  
- 7. Presentations/feedback session**
  - Coral Black (UON Librarian) & Ann Hardy spoke about the UON Library Vision & Strategy Review and received verbal and written feedback from the about how they engage with the library and services. There was a lot of open discussion from a community user perspective and will be considered by the Library strategy team. Members were invited further comment via an online survey see <https://hunterlivinghistories.com/2019/10/11/uon-libcomm/> or sending comments directly to Ann.

- Shehroz Mustafa (UON WIL student) gave a presentation on his review of the GLAMx Lab and VDRHF. Report is due in November. Many thanks to Maria Pavela and team at UON Office of Alumni and Philanthropy for their support.

## 8. Reports and Updates

- **Gionni di Gravio** – Gionni expressed with great sadness the passing of Russell Rigby. His funeral took place on 9 October 2019 at Pettigrew Funerals at Wallsend and many of his HLH colleagues were present. Gionni gave a moving eulogy, and read out at meeting as follows :-

*“In Honour of Russell Rigby*

*On behalf of Russell’s University Coal River Working Party (now, Hunter Living Histories) friends and colleagues we are very saddened by his loss. He leaves a gap in our lives that cannot be filled and in the words of Robert Watson, “we miss him already”.*

*He was our longest serving volunteer having dedicated his time and effort for over 16 years as a consulting geologist and mining historian since the Coal River Working Party was originally formed in 2003.*

*As one of our core researchers, his work with the assistance of Associate Prof Robin Offler, was crucial in the rediscovery of Newcastle’s convict coal mines in 2005.*

*It was at this time, that he came out of the shadows when an obscure mining term, flukin, caught his eye on the 1804 plan of the convict coal mine at Newcastle. What struck me was his devout attention to detail, having us look into multivolume Oxford dictionaries in the Library to finally understand it as “a vein of clayey material”.*

*He also helped rediscover the original layout and starting point of Macquarie Pier, the ‘Newcastle Breakwater’ which was established in 1818. This was formally recognised in 2010 with the placing of a bronze marker by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO.*

*His timescape work with historical overlays formed the foundation for Charles Martin’s 3D Virtual Newcastle Time Machine Project to recreate early Newcastle from Aboriginal pre-colonial times to the early colonial period. The video we produced in 2017 has had over 17,000 views and is a beautiful testament to his work behind the scenes.*

*He guided and mentored our University’s students with the scientific and technical rigor that us romantic history types mostly lack, and really need; even providing some of them with his direct number to his hospital bed when he was undergoing his treatments.*

*Russell was the quality control guy. He was always generous with his knowledge and assistance, and his work has helped them to learn Newcastle and the Hunter Region to learn more about its origins and history.*

*Many depended on him, and he always came through, right up until the end.*

*From time to time, he would deliver presentations on his work. My favourite was on the one he gave on the workings of the Port of Newcastle.*

*Through his words he brought to life how it was created and how it worked, and in so doing de-froze all those black and white and sepia still photographs of the 19th century. The Carrington Pump House came to life as the lungs of this mechanical “organism”; a living breathing machine created by engineers, a reflection of the precise internal mechanism of a watch, part of the instrumentalities to get coal in and out of the Newcastle Port.*

*In recent times he would introduce himself at meetings as a retired geologist, mining historian and some kind of historical “gadfly”, the latter meaning someone who spiked, bit, and generally annoyed others into action.*

*But he was nothing of the sort; he was a quietly spoken, highly intelligent man who used his knowledge and expertise to help others in the University and community in whatever they were trying to do.*

*In 2015 Russell received a volunteer award bestowed by Federal Member for Newcastle Sharon Claydon MP. But to our surprise and everyone else’s, didn’t show up at the official ceremony, as he “hadn’t received the memo” or “may have sent it to the trash bin”. And we, being circumspect, hadn’t wanted to spill the beans.*

*So, at our 3rd August 2015 meeting of the Coal River Working Party Russell was presented with his Newcastle Community Volunteer Award for his tremendous contribution to the Newcastle Community, and historical research over many years in front of his colleagues who warmly and thanked and congratulated him on this wonderful achievement, and his enduring commitment.*

*He will be sorely missed. It was a great honour to know him, and work with him, and share his knowledge with the local community and the world through our websites, where his work will continue to live on in perpetuity.*

*We convey our deep condolences to his wife Carolyn, his immediate family and friends, and wish them all to know that we share a small part of their grief during this sad time.*

*Goodbye Russell and on behalf of the Hunter Living Histories community we thank you for all your help and wish you all the best.” Gionni Di Gravio 9 October 2019*

There is also a tribute to Russell on the HLH page, see

<https://hunterlivinghistories.com/2019/09/28/russell-rigby/>

- An event was held at Newcastle City Hall on 25 September awarding Vera Deacon Freeman of the City of Newcastle, (that she renamed the Freewoman of the City of Newcastle). Vera is an historian and the University of Newcastle's great philanthropist, has been awarded at a special ceremony held in her honour. Several people spoke about Vera's contribution including Gionni and Ann. Further information about the event and testimonials are available here <https://hunterlivinghistories.com/2019/09/30/vera-freewoman/>
- HLH blog post 'Glenrock's Incredible Voyage' by John Lewis is available online, summarising historical event that occurred 228 years ago whereby eight men, a woman and her two young children landed on what was almost certainly the beach at Glenrock Lagoon on the first leg of what was to be an epic 69-day, 5236-kilometre open boat voyage to Timor. Further information is available here <https://hunterlivinghistories.com/2019/09/30/glenrocks-incredible-voyage/>
- Gionni gave a report on the GLAM Peak meeting held on Friday 26 July and hosted by the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). GLAM Peak is the peak representative bodies of the galleries, libraries, archives and museums across Australia – which began meeting in mid-2015, collaborating to enable people to access, use and build on our national collections. The key focus of this meeting was GLAM advocacy planning, and understanding the motivations and key emphases of the incoming political environment in which we all operate in. Further information is available here <https://hunterlivinghistories.com/2019/09/24/gp15/>
- Maps of Newcastle and suburbs are now available. This post came about due to Russell Rigby's excellent presentation on the Hunter District Water Board Plans of the 1890s in 2018. At the time he was writing and the plans had not yet been uploaded to any of our sites. However, they have now been uploaded to our Living Histories @ UON platform. all 270 items in this collection at see <https://livinghistories.newcastle.edu.au/nodes/view/95155>
- **Ann Hardy - GLAMx Lab update:** Ann gave a brief update of the WIL communication students in the Lab, and that Josephine interview Ron Slater last week, he was former Sabre pilot that featured in NBN archival footage from 1963 (Mayfield plane crash).
- The Store Oral History Project was launched on Friday 27 September at NewSpace building, it was a success and many of the interviewees and their families were present.

There was also good media coverage including NBN television, ABC Radio and Newcastle Herald. We thanks all the interviewees for their contributions. For further information see <https://hunterlivinghistories.com/2019/09/27/tsorp/>

- **Bob James, historian** – Held over due to time constraints.
- **Tom Smith- Newcastle Council update:** N/A
- **Tim Adams** – Umwelt – gave an update of current projects.

**9. Historical Groups & Museums updates –**

**10. Public Advocacy – N/A**

**11. General Business –**

**12. Close: 3.00 PM**

Date of next meeting will be Monday, 4th November 2019 at IDC Building, Callaghan Campus  
1-3pm.